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ABSTRACT

This study looks at how the methodology of comparative education research has contributed, or not contributed, to understanding the role of minority languages in European education systems. An introductory chapter of the report is devoted to explanation of the work of Mercator-Education, a European center concerned with languages not commonly taught. The second chapter discusses comparative methodology in studying social phenomena in general and more specifically, in education. Chapter three chronicles the historical development of comparative education from the late eighteenth century to the present day. The fourth chapter looks more closely at the evolving methodology of comparative education, including the contributions of the dominant positivist paradigm, cultural relativism and phenomenology, the problem-solving approach, and the case study approach. Chapter 5 discusses the explanatory analyses given by education researchers and sociologists concerning the educational position of minority languages, with emphasis on cultural pluralism, multilingualism, regional identity, and curriculum control. A concluding chapter makes recommendations for further research and looks at the utility of theory-driven case study research in the future. Contains 154 references. (MSE)

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Understanding the position of lesser used languages in European educational systems: the contribution of comparative education

Wim Jan T. Renkema

Ljouwert/Leeuwarden
Fryske Akademy/Mercator-Education

1995

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'It is the *why* rather than the *how* that permits one to embark upon direct comparison'

George Bereday, *Comparative method in education*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964, 21

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Preface

This study intends to facilitate the comparison of minority schooling in the European Union. It was written within the context of Mercator-Education, the European centre and network dealing with lesser used languages in European educational systems. Mercator-Education is one of the three Mercator centres that are supported by the European Commission (DG XXII Human Resources, Training and Youth). Mercator-Education is based at the Fryske Akademy in Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. The aims of Mercator-Education are three-fold:

- to exchange information
- to build and maintain a database of documentation
- to conduct comparative research

on minority languages in European education.

The present study is the product of research based on data collected by Mercator-Education as well as other (bibliographical) sources. Earlier projects of Mercator-Education, such as PREP (on pre-primary education), LEMA (on learning material), and EMOL (on teacher training) have resulted in synthesis reports and a large number of separate descriptive studies, for all language communities concerned. The EMU project (based at the Fryske Akademy, 1986-1988) resulted in a number of separate publications on the lesser used languages in European primary education (the EMU reports, 1988). A comprehensive synthesis report was also published (Sikma and Gorter, 1988; Sikma and Gorter, 1991).

The object of study in all these cases required a comparative, cross-regional (and cross-national) approach. The study at hand mainly aims to deepen the understanding of the comparative method as used in the social sciences. Most attention is given to the comparative study of educational systems and educational policy. It provides an overview of 'comparative education' as an academic field that informs teaching practice as well as international, national and regional educational policy. The Mercator-Education studies are positioned within comparative education and Mercator-Education's approach is evaluated. Apart from giving this overview of comparative education, this study attempts to contribute to the development of an explanatory theory of the position of lesser used languages in European educational systems.

The first Chapter provides the reader with an overview of the work of Mercator-Education. Most attention is given to the methodological aspects of previous projects. Moreover, in this Chapter two research questions are presented. They can be reduced to the following central concern: what in comparative education is worthwhile for the study of the position of lesser used languages in European education? The object of research of Mercator-Education is the position of the lesser used languages in educational systems in Europe. This object suffers from ambiguous definition. It should be noted that in the present study 'lesser used languages' is considered synonymous with 'indigenous (or autochthonous) minority languages'. The minorities involved are referred to as 'language minorities'. Also used is 'regional minorities'. This issue of definition is addressed briefly in the first Chapter.

The first research question concerns the methodological considerations that have been regarded as essential in comparative social science, particularly comparative education. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this study try to give an answer to this question. Together these Chapters provide an overview of the field of comparative education, with an emphasis on methodological issues. Chapter 5 addresses the second research question, which involves the explanatory analyses of educationists and sociologists with regard to the educational position of minorities. The final Chapter 6 summarizes the results and includes suggestions for further research and recommendations.

Parts of this report were presented in June 1994 at the 16th CESE conference in Copenhagen. An extended version of Section 4.5 was presented as a discussion paper at the workshop for young researchers under the title: 'Case studies in comparative education: beyond the particular?' Chapter 5 was presented in a working group under the title '*Regional identities in Europe: the position of lesser used languages in the educational systems of the European Union*' and was published in '*Tertium Comparationis: Journal für Internationale Bildungsforschung*' (1995: No. 1, 42–62).

The study has benefitted from the support of several people at the Fryske Akademy. Thanks are due to Auke van der Goot, Durk Gorter, Piet Hemminga, Rommert Tjeerdsma, Mark Stuijt and Jehannes Ytsma for reviewing parts of this report. Their critical remarks and suggestions have been helpful. I would also like to thank Juanita Bruining for her assistance in polishing the lay-out. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment for allowing me to discharge my alternative national service at the Fryske Akademy.

Hopefully some benefits and limits of a comparative approach in educational research will become evident through this study. Moreover, I hope that it will contribute to a better comprehension of the position of lesser used languages in European educational systems.

Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, June 1995 — Wim Jan Renkema

Chapter 1: Mercator-Education and comparative studies

1.1 Mercator-Education

1.1.1 Political and institutional background

Mercator-Education is concerned with the position of lesser used languages in European education, in particular in the educational systems of the European Union. The political concern about these languages is of relatively recent date: the debate on their position has intensified in the last decade. The increasing political, cultural and economic unity of Western Europe has in general been viewed as a threat to the continued existence of the lesser used languages. The languages of majorities are replacing those of minorities. Instruction in[1] or about[2] a minority language is viewed as a way of maintaining this language (cf. Edwards, 1988).

Youngsters are the next generation that will be able to communicate in the minority language. Political initiatives have therefore been taken on a European level to promote the use of the indigenous minority languages in Europe's educational systems[3]. The general purpose of this promotion is to sustain Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity. Early European political involvement with the lesser used languages dates back to October 1981 when the European Parliament approved the Arfè-resolution. This enabled the European Commission to develop a program of activities in order to improve the position of the lesser used languages. One of the results of the Arfè-resolution was the establishment in 1982 of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL). The bureau is based in Dublin, Ireland and has as its general aim to preserve and promote the lesser used autochthonous languages of the European Union, together with their associated cultures (cf. "Unity in Diversity" Brochure, EBLUL, 1993).

In October 1987 the European Parliament passed the Kuijpers-resolution on the protection of the languages and cultures of regional minorities. This resolution calls for action to be taken by the EU member states, such as legal recognition for their language minorities, wider access to broadcasting facilities and legal guarantees for the use of minority languages in governmental and juridical affairs. Moreover, the Kuijpers-resolution asked to allow for minority language education to be conducted at all levels and to recognize its equality with education in the national language (cf. Sikma and Gorter, 1991, 1).

The year 1987 also saw the birth of the Mercator Network, a large documentation, information and research network on lesser used languages. It is supported by the European Commission and

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1 In this case, the lesser used language (or minority language; ML) is *medium* of instruction: it is employed as language of instruction in all or selected subjects of the school curriculum.

2 Language instruction: the lesser used language involved is *object* of instruction. Main goal of this instruction is the improvement of pupils' language skills.

3 For example: the adoption of the Arfé-resolution (1981/1983), the Kuijpers-resolution (1987) and the Killilea-resolution (1994) by the European Parliament, and the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe of the European Charter for Regional and Minority languages (1992). This charter has been adopted as a convention, to be ratified by the member states of the Council of Europe. In all resolutions and in the European Charter the contribution of education to maintaining the European lesser used languages is firmly stated. The Council of Europe, for instance, speaks of: 'the fundamental importance of teaching and, more specifically, of the school system, for the preservation of regional or minority languages' (European Charter for Regional and Minority languages, explanatory memorandum, 1993, 25).

is currently coordinated by DG XXII Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth. Mercator-Education is one of the three branches that together make up the Mercator Network[4]. Mercator-Education collects, stores and exchanges information on all aspects of education in lesser used languages communities in the European Union. At this moment, 17 institutes collaborate in Mercator-Education, each of which represents a minority language community.

1.1.2 Minority languages and education: the role of Mercator-Education

Mercator-Education focuses on the position of the indigenous minority languages throughout the educational systems in particular. It is based at the Fryske Akademy in Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. At the Fryske Akademy, Mercator-Education activities are carried out in the Department of Social Sciences. This department had developed expertise on the comparative study of minority language education at the primary level: during 1986-1988 it executed the EMU project (Sikma and Gorter, 1988)[5]. This project can be described as a follow-up study of a similar project that had been executed on pre-primary level (Ó Murchú, 1987). EMU aimed at an inventory of 'the position of the regional minority languages in primary education in the member states of the European Community' (Sikma and Gorter, 1988, 2). It resulted in a total of 34 separate studies and a comparative synthesis report (Sikma and Gorter, 1988). A conference for which all contributors were invited was held in Riis in April 1988. The synthesis report and the proceedings of the conference were jointly published in 1991 (Sikma and Gorter, 1991). The conference, called 'Lesser Used Languages in Primary Education', resulted in the Declaration of Riis, in which the participants, representing no less than 35 language communities in EU-member states, called on the European Commission:

> 'to ensure, now that inventories have been completed for two levels of education – pre-primary and primary – the making of similar inventories for the secondary, tertiary and university levels and the undertaking of pedagogical research, immediately and concurrently, and to initiate continuous updating of completed and projected studies (Sikma and Gorter, 1991, 263).

Since its start, three new inventory projects have been carried out under aegis of Mercator-Education, all conducted in a way more or less similar to EMU. These are PREP (on pre-primary provisions for lesser used languages), LEMA (on the provision of learning materials for lesser used languages) and EMOL (on the position of the lesser used languages in European teacher education). These three themes were suggested by the participants at the conference in Riis.

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[4] The three Mercator branches focus on various topics, viz. media (Aberystwyth, Wales, U.K.), legislation (Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain) and education (Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, Friesland, Netherlands).

[5] The name 'EMU' was derived from the Frisian project title: Europeeske Minderheidstalen yn it primêre Underwiis (European minority languages in primary education).

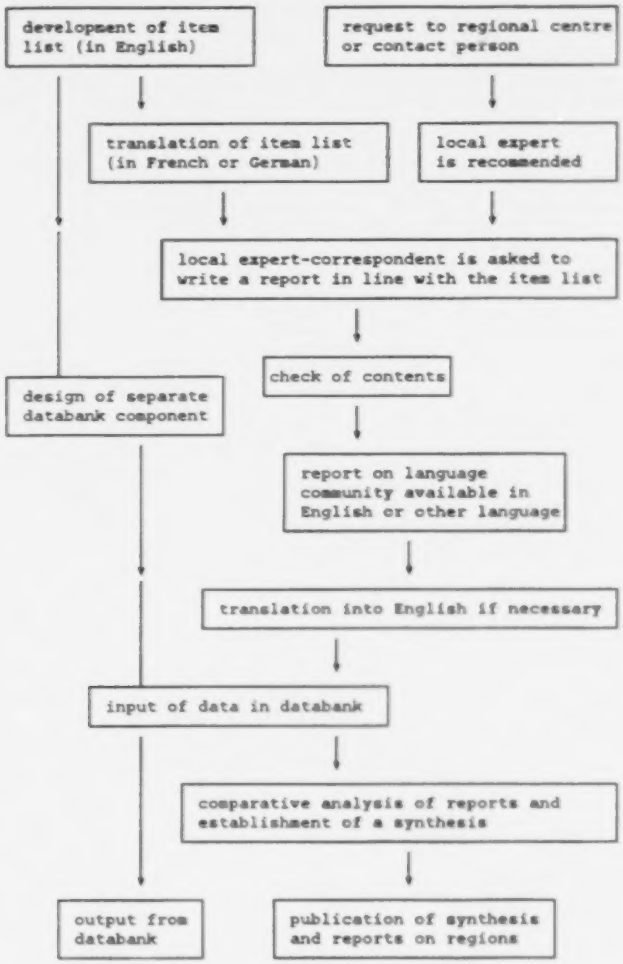
development of item list (in English)
request to regional centre or contact person
translation of item list (in French or German)
local expert is recommended
local expert-correspondent is asked to write a report in line with the item list
check of contents
design of separate databank component
report on language community available in English or other language
translation into English if necessary
input of data in databank
comparative analysis of reports and establishment of a synthesis
output from databank
publication of synthesis and reports on regions

Figure 1: The conduct of Mercator-Education's comparative inventory studies: a multi-stage design (Source: adapted from Tjeerdsma, 1993)

1.1.3 The object of the comparative inventory studies

The first inventory, on the position of lesser used languages in primary education (EMU), was followed by three other similar projects:

- EMOL (1990-1993)[6]. A synthesis report of EMOL has been published (Dekkers, 1995).

[6] The name 'EMOL' was derived from the Frisian project title and is an abbreviation of 'Europeeske minderheidstalen yn 'e oplieding fan leararen' (European minority languages in teacher training). The project aimed at an inventory of the position of the lesser used languages in the training of teachers for primary and secondary education in the European Union.

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- PREP (1992–1993)[7]. PREP resulted in an overview of current provisions van der Goot, Renkema and Stuijt, 1994).
- LEMA (1992–1993)[8]. A synthesis report of LEMA has been published (Tjeerdsma and Sikma, 1994).

The object of study in all these cases is (an aspect of) the educational position of lesser used languages within the European Union. All educational provisions, public as well as private, are included in Mercator–Education inventories.

The concept 'lesser used languages' requires some further explanation. Within the present 15 member states of the European Union, up to 40 million people in over 40 different communities speak a 'lesser used language' (appendix 1). The Council of Europe has named these languages 'regional or minority languages'[9]. All of these languages are spoken by a minority in the state involved[10]. The languages concerned have been defined by using diverse concepts such as: '(indigenous) minority languages', 'regional languages' and 'lesser used (autochthonous) languages'. Mercator–Education generally uses the term 'lesser used languages' (although also, 'minority language' (ML) is being used). This concept embraces[11]:

1. Unique languages spoken in only one EU member state, e.g. Welsh in the United Kingdom, Galician in Spain, Sardinian in Italy or Sorbian in Germany;
2. Unique languages spread over more than one EU member state, e.g. Basque, both in Spain and France;
3. Languages spoken by an autochthonous minority in a particular EU member state, but which are also the language of the majority in another (EU member) state: e.g. German as spoken in Italy, France, Belgium and Denmark, Danish in Germany or Slovene in Italy;
4. Languages which are national languages at EU member state level, but which do not enjoy the status of official working language of the European Union, viz. Luxembourgish and Irish.

The above Mercator–Education projects all aimed at a comparative inventory. Two distinctive elements of such a 'comparative inventory' can be mentioned: the collection of data from language communities in Europe, followed by a comparison of these data in order to be able to

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7 PREP is an abbreviation of pre–primary education and aimed at an inventory of pre–primary provisions in lesser used languages throughout the European Union.

8 LEMA is an abbreviation for learning material and aimed at an inventory of the development, production and dissemination of learning material for minority language education, at the pre–primary and primary level of education in the European Union.

9 'Many European countries have on their territory regionally based autochthonous groups speaking a language other than that of the majority of the population. This is a consequence of historical processes whereby the formation of states has not taken place on purely language–related lines and small communities have been engulfed by larger ones' (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, explanatory report, 1993, 3).

10 Luxembourgish is not spoken by a minority of the people in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Nearly all inhabitants of this country speak Luxembourgish. It is nevertheless considered a 'lesser used language' because of its status in the European Union.

11 This classification was made by the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages.

draw conclusions and make recommendations for educational policy. Both elements will be discussed in the following section.

1.2 Comparative inventory studies

1.2.1 Conduct of the comparative inventory studies

One of Mercator-Education's aims is conducting research on lesser used languages in education. This aim has been pursued until now by, firstly, gathering language-community specific data and, secondly, comparing these data. Data-gathering has lead to the publication of separate, descriptive regional studies. The gathering of such data, not burdened by theoretical presumptions, can be understood as a first phase of inductive research. The writers of the EMU synthesis report underline the fact that the choice was made for such a pragmatic approach, in which theoretical aspects were left out of consideration (Sikma and Gorter, 1991, x). Apart from the publication of separate studies, this data-gathering 'materially' has resulted in the development of a database on minority language education in Europe.

A second step has been the comparison of these specific data with each other. The succession of these two steps, the gathering of data from language communities and their comparison constitute the comparative inventory studies Mercator-Education has undertaken thus far. The conduct of these studies can be described as following a multi-stage design as portrayed in the diagram (Figure 1). The following aspects of this design are important:

- The use of expert-correspondents from the language communities involved. This use of well-informed experts who have professional knowledge about minority language education in their own region guarantees a high standard of information in the separate reports. The correspondents can be regarded as 'key informants'. In most cases a check of the content of the draft report was included.
- The development and use of a pre-defined, standardized item list. To avoid the production of very diverse reports (in terms of how the information is structured), an item list is used through which a range of identical items is presented in the same order to the correspondents.
- The construction and elaboration of a separate databank component. A large databank has been created on the educational aspects of lesser used languages. For the separate projects, specific databank components were created, from which detailed information (for comparison, or other use) can be retrieved.

Conducting research by means of this design is not without difficulties. In the EMU project four difficulties related to this approach were perceived (cf. Sikma and Gorter, 1991, x-xi):

- Conceptual equivalence, when developing research instruments, is not easily achieved (1);
- The practical organization of international research is troublesome (2).
- Reducing an inventory of individual cases into a synthesis is difficult (3);
- Comparing social phenomena from various regions and/or cultures is difficult, for reasons of diversity (4).

These perceived difficulties can be reduced to two main problems:

- The problem of the organisation of comparative research, especially the gathering of equivalent data (1st and 2nd difficulty);

- The problem of comparison itself, especially the drawing of conclusions on the basis of diverse data (3rd and 4th difficulty).

1.2.2 Rationale of this study: the problem of comparison

Of the two problems mentioned above the second is the most profound, as it addresses the production of valid knowledge from comparison. Comparison of data from different settings is not an easy task. Within Mercator-Education it has been attempted to undertake this task with great care and precision. The goal of this cross-regional/cross-national comparison has been to reach a higher level of analysis than would have been achieved by solely the publication of separate descriptive studies. In other words, comparison is understood as an attempt to 'compound' or synthesize the data from the inventory:

> 'The objective of compiling and processing reports from the different language areas was first of all, *to arrive at a synthesis* [italics added], an inventory of the different situations by means of comparison of a number of aspects of the language situations' (Sikma and Gorter, 1991, 10).

As can be read from the above diagram Mercator-Education's approach involves the use of expert-correspondents who are asked to respond to a pre defined, standardized list of items. These responses are used as the 'raw material' for comparison (the establishment of a synthesis). So, all relevant items delivered by the correspondents are successively analyzed and compared in order to synthesize them. In most projects it was attempted to classify the items from different backgrounds according to a 'strength-weakness' dimension. This choice for a strength-weakness classification has been one out of several options[12]. The selected framework of strengths and weaknesses proved to be rather difficult to work with, as can be understood from the EMU-synthesis report:

> 'During the construction of the synthesis report, the classifications first thought possible for the minority languages – on the basis of strength and weakness – proved to be unworkable for some items. Either because the situations described were so diverse, or because the items did not fully lend themselves to a "strength-weakness analysis". Nevertheless, we used this classification, where possible' (Sikma and Gorter, 1991, 10).

The problems Mercator-Education confronted are not new. The comparative approach has a long tradition within the social sciences. The cross-regional, cross-national or cross-cultural study of diverse phenomena such as religion, law, political decision-making, education and social stratification has led to the establishment of comparative branches of the social sciences, e.g. comparative law, comparative religion, comparative sociology and comparative education. So, within current social science there is an increasing knowledge base that addresses problems inherent to comparative studies (Sjoberg, 1969; Smelser, 1976; Berting, Geyer and Jurkovich, 1979; Kohn, 1989a; Øyen, 1990a).

The present study mainly attempts to provide an overview of what has been done in comparative research, specifically comparative education, that can be of value for Mercator-Education. Additionally, this study intends to contribute to the development of an explanatory theory of the

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[12] This was also the case in Ó'Murchú's comparative study of pre-primary education: 'Provision of a clear synthesis on comparative lines implies an ordering of material *according to selected criteria* [italics added]. There were several choices that could have been made as to what constituted a suitable framework' (Ó'Murchú, 1987, 10).

position of the indigenous minority languages in European educational systems. Until now, Mercator-Education made no determined efforts to develop such a theory. Rather, the focus of Mercator-Education's activities has been to gather and compare data pragmatically and inductively.

1.3 Research questions and overview of this study

1.3.1 The first goal: deepening methodological understanding

In sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 both the way in which Mercator-Education has worked and some problems experienced were discussed. The rationale of the current study, deepening the understanding of the comparative method and contributing to explanation, was made clear. This section addresses the research questions asked in the study at hand and the way they are answered. 'Research' can be defined as 'determined and methodical searching for new knowledge in the form of answers to questions that have been formulated in advance' (Verschuren, 1992, 22). Research is guided by a problem definition, which consists of two elements[13] (Verschuren, 1992, 37):

- A research goal: what does the study aim to achieve?
- A research question: what knowledge is needed for achieving this aim?

The rationale of this study lies in the problems Mercator-Education experienced in the comparative phase of the previous projects. For Mercator-Education the need was felt to assess its methodology and ameliorate its comparative analyses. Therefore, the first goal of the current study is:

> Goal 1: to deepen the theoretical understanding of the comparative method in social sciences in order to improve the quality of the cross-regional/cross-national, comparative study of the position of lesser used languages in education.

To achieve this goal, knowledge is needed of existing methods within (comparative) social science as a whole and comparative education in particular. The object of research therefore can be defined as 'comparative methodology'. The first question to be answered in this study is:

> Question 1: what methodological considerations have been regarded as essential in comparative social science, in particular comparative education?

[13] In other words: the latter question addresses what exactly is investigated (object), while the former addresses why this object is investigated (significance).

This question is answered in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Answering this question presupposes the existence of methods that are typically used in comparative research. The existence of such a strictly comparative methodology has been questioned (e.g. Farrell, 1986; Hurst, 1987). Nevertheless, branches of the social sciences have organized themselves along the lines of their comparative activities, such as comparative sociology, comparative religion and comparative education. Their status and methodology will be discussed briefly in Chapter 2.

Of these comparative fields of study 'comparative education' of course is of most importance to Mercator-Education. The object of comparative education has been defined by many authors (Bereday, 1964; Noah and Eckstein, 1969; Wielemans, 1977; Brickmann, 1988, Halls, 1990a). The question has been raised as to whether comparative education should involve itself strictly with internal school affairs or also with broad issues such as the relation between schooling and society. Also the focus of comparison has been debated. In this study comparative education is *defined* as: the study of education as a social phenomenon, aiming at the acquisition of knowledge of educational systems, policies and practices through comparison of different nations, regions or historical periods.

In comparative education little agreement on 'comparative methodology' exists. Nevertheless, an attempt will be made to sketch, following an historical overview (Sections 3.1 and 3.2), the current state of comparative education (3.3) and to summarize several views on the comparative study of education (Chapter 4). The methodological debate has concentrated on how comparative education can obtain 'scientific' knowledge (Eckstein and Noah, 1969; Noah and Eckstein, 1969; Barber, 1972; Holmes, 1981a, 1981b, 1988; Farrell, 1986; Schriewer 1988). Of special importance in this debate, and highly relevant to the type of research Mercator-Education has been conducting, is the use of case studies, which is discussed in Section 4.5. As a whole Chapters 2, 3 and 4 offer a 'state of the art' of comparative research, in particular comparative education, focusing on methodological issues.

1.3.2 The second goal: contributing to explanation

It is presumed that a well-conducted comparison of data on lesser used languages in education would enable Mercator-Education to draw conclusions and formulate suggestions for European policy. In other words: comparative analysis leads to an adequate description of the (relative) position of the lesser used languages in education, on a national and international scale. This description implies the establishment of a typology of the position of lesser used languages in European education.

Yet, to go beyond a mere description of the position of lesser used languages in European educational systems would mean that an explanation would have been offered. True understanding can only be based on an explanatory theory. Referring to Durkheim, Halls (1981) distinguishes between the development of a typology of educational systems and subsequent explanatory analysis:

> 'Research (...) initially consists in the establishment of typologies. But once the characteristics of educational systems have been ascertained by comparison, for Durkheim the real task begins. This is the explanatory phase, where reasons must be found for similarities and differences' (Halls, 1981, 151).

Until now, Mercator-Education has not attempted to develop a theory that explains the similarities and differences found. However, the development of such a theory is required, both for academic and policy purposes. The second goal of the current study is:

Goal 2: to contribute to the development of an explanatory theory of the position of lesser used languages in European educational systems.

To achieve this second goal, knowledge is needed of how sociological and educational theory in general, and comparative education in particular, have dealt with issues of cultural pluralism and the position of ethnic minorities. Such analyses, especially when based on a comparative approach, are valuable for developing a necessary explanatory theory: they are considered as valuable components for the development of such a theory. The second aim therefore leads to the following research question:

Question 2: what explanatory analyses have been proposed in sociological and educational theory in general and in comparative education in particular that address questions relevant to the position of minority languages?

In this study Mercator-Education's general research object ('the position of lesser used languages in European educational systems') is perceived as a situation in which European minority groups attempt to change the school curriculum in such a way that it more adequately represents the diversity of society, as experienced by them.

The position of minorities in culturally diverse societies has been examined by comparative education. The demands of minorities regarding the school curriculum is an aspect that increasingly attracts attention of comparative educationists. Chapter 5 addresses how comparative educationists have examined multilingualism and multiculturalism in educational systems. In this Chapter, both the issues of (regional) identity and of curriculum control appear as essential.

The next two Chapters end with a short discussion, focusing on what the Chapter offers for the comparative study of minority language education. In the final Chapter the results of the study are again summarized, but now as a whole. Suggestions for further research and recommendations are also made. In the Mercator-Education Network considerable information is available on the different language situations within the language communities concerned. A large databank on bilingualism, bilingual education and the education of minority languages has been established by Mercator-Education. This study is based on these data as well as other (bibliographical) sources. The method of study is bibliographical research[14].

[14] Volumes of the following journals have been consulted: Compare; Comparative Education; Comparative Education Review; Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development; Language, Culture and Curriculum; Language and Education.

Chapter 2: Comparative methodology

2.1 The comparative study of social phenomena

The concept of 'comparative methodology' refers to the rules and criteria a social scientist needs to attend to when conducting comparative research[15]. Such a comparative methodology could enhance the study of minority language education in diverse regions. Several social phenomena, such as government, law, language, social stratification and religious habits, have been studied 'comparatively'. This chapter addresses the methodological considerations of some branches of the comparative social sciences. The question asked in this chapter is whether a 'comparative methodology', useful for the comparative study of minority schooling, exists. Three disciplines will be treated. The example of comparative religion is dealt with briefly in the present section, whereas comparative sociology is the subject of the next section (2.2). In 2.3 the object of comparative education, the field of most interest to Mercator-Education, is described. Especially the issue of what exactly constitutes 'comparative' in the term 'comparative education' appears to be critical.

Since mankind began encountering other human beings in different countries and cultures, it has been engaged in the comparison of social events and phenomena at home and abroad. Ancient authors such as Herodotus and Tacitus already reported the political and religious customs of their contemporaries. Later, during the 15th and 16th centuries, many travellers described the habits encountered in newly discovered, remote areas.

Religious behaviour is one of the phenomena that has frequently been described and analyzed. Throughout Western history cults, beliefs and religious practices of others have been documented (cf. Sharpe, 1986, 1-26). Not until the 18th century however, did this study of religion become a more detached activity and was objective inquiry pursued. The comparison of religions brought about the view that religious practices evoluted from concrete to abstract and that several 'stages of religion' exist (cf. Sharpe, 1986, 19, concerning: *'Natural history of religion'* (1755) by David Hume). During the 19th century this historical analysis dominated as a research method, employing categories such as 'progress', 'evolution' and 'development' and influenced by the thoughts of Hegel and Comte. At the same time, however, much of the work done in comparative religion was still 'eclectic, intuitive, frequently inaccurate, resting on the foundations of a highly individual personal philosophy' (Sharpe, 1986, 24).

In the 1860s the concept of a 'science of comparative religion' was employed for the first time. 'Comparative' referred to the fact that this new science 'claimed *comparison to be the basis of all knowledge* [italics added]. It compared the known with the unknown, it compared phenomena in apparent temporal sequence, it compared phenomena belonging to different areas but having features in common. In all this, in the true scientific spirit, it set out to determine, with regard to religion, the genus "religion" which underlay the species "the religions"' (Sharpe, 1986, 32). Strongly influenced by the ideas of Spencer this 'new non-confessional approach to the study of religion' (Sharpe, 1986, 32) can be regarded as positivistic. The founding fathers of this modern discipline of comparative religion were Müller (1823-1900) in England and Tiele

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[15] Consider: 'The methodology of any science involves its *rules of interpretation* and *criteria for admissible explanation*, as well as the research designs, data-collecting techniques, and data-processing routines that have been developed from these *rules* and *criteria*' (Holt and Turner, 1970, 2).

(1830–1902) in the Netherlands[16]. 'Comparative religion' established itself as a discipline at European and American universities at the end of the 19th century. It developed, influenced by both European phenomenology and American anthropology of religion, into one of the branches of theology, along with branches such as philosophy of religion.

Methodologically, comparative religion has been very much oriented on historical inquiry[17], but in recent decades other, mostly ethnographic, methods have been introduced. Sharp (1986) remarks that:

> '(...) the abandonment of one method has not meant its automatic replacement by another. For many years now the question of method has been wide open, and despite the high seriousness which has always been found in the study of religion, the scholarly community has not always been able to agree on the terms or conditions on which that study ought to be pursued' (Sharpe, 1986, 268).

During the 1960s and 1970s this methodological diversification of discipline was expressed in the fact that many university departments referred to 'religious studies'[18] instead of 'comparative religion'. Within such departments religion is a multi-disciplinary study, with an emphasis on historical methods alongside other methods: 'History could (...) be seen as only one possible approach to the study of religion alongside sociology, ethnology, anthropology, psychology and the rest' (Sharpe, 1986, 298). Sharpe points to the fact that much of the comparative study of religion has recently shifted to a sociological approach, bringing an increase in methodological debate (Sharpe, 1986, 306–310). He calls this merging of what originally was called 'comparative religion' a 'marriage of convenience with the social sciences' (Sharpe, 1986, 310).

This example of comparative religion shows that methodological questions within a distinct 'comparative discipline' have not always been answered by a specific 'comparative methodology' of that discipline[19]. Rather, methods from the historical and social sciences in general have been used. The next section addresses the methodological considerations of the social sciences, in particular sociology, when confronted with comparative research.

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16 Max Müller wrote in 1873 in his *Introduction to the science of religion* the following: '(...) All higher knowledge is acquired by comparison and rests on comparison. If it is said that the character of scientific research in our age is pre-eminently comparative, this really means that our researches are now based on the widest evidence that can be obtained, on the broadest indications that can be grasped by the human mind' (cited in: Sharpe, 1986, 43).

17 Sharpe remarks that comparative religion often 'functioned as a specialised kind of ancient history' (Sharpe, 1986, 308).

18 The term 'history of religion' was also used, reflecting the field's historical orientation.

19 An example of a field that has followed an own approach may be comparative law. Resulting from the necessity to develop constitutions, 18th and 19th century law experts started to compare legal systems and judicial practices. An introduction into the comparison of different systems of law is still part of the curriculum in law schools. A recent development that illustrates the relevance of such study is the European unification process, resulting in new legislation that effects national law. 'Comparative law' as a field is close to 'comparative politics', the comparative study of political systems or government: both study contemporary phenomena relevant to government and policy-making at national level. The first is less concerned with the development of theory than the latter. Rather, comparative law concentrates on the description of distinct legal systems.

2.2 The definition and purpose of comparison: some considerations from sociology

2.2.1 The comparative approach: three perspectives

The social sciences, and in particular sociology, have engaged themselves profoundly with the problem of comparative methodology. Many authors have reflected upon the comparative approach in the social sciences (e.g. Sjoberg, 1969; Holt and Turner, 1970; Smelser, 1976; Berting, Geyer and Jurkovich, 1979; Niessen and Peschar, 1982; Kohn, 1989a; Øyen, 1990a). Broadly speaking, three main perspectives can be detected within this literature. These perspectives are sketched below. It has been stated that:

a) the comparative approach in a sense covers all sociological research, since all research compares some variables with others (cf. Eisenstadt, 1968). In this view all social science is comparative, because social science research is involved with the (comparative) analysis of differences and similarities of social phenomena. It combines inductive reasoning with deductive speculation in order to establish scientific theory. In this view there is no specific 'comparative methodology' for the social sciences, as all science is comparative. An example of this argument is Øyen's observation that 'when sociologists choose to observe only part of the surrounding social realities, the choice always represents a comparison of the selected phenomenon under observation in relation to other social phenomena (...)' (Øyen, 1990b, 4).

b) the comparative approach is a strategy of social science research that is profoundly different from other strategies. The comparative approach results in knowledge not produced by other research. In this view, 'comparative methodology' ideally should deliver unique rules and criteria, distinct from those in general attended to by social scientists.

c) the comparative approach is concerned with investigating social phenomena in different cultures, societies, or countries. Comparative research is the same as cross-national or cross-cultural research (e.g. Kohn, 1989a; Øyen, 1990a). In this view comparative research may or may not bring with it specific problems unique for investigations crossing national borders. However, there is no real epistemological difference between comparative research or research within one nation or culture. 'Comparative methodology' may be different from the general rules and criteria researchers should attend to, in so far that it has to take into account the problems inherent to research across national or cultural borders.

The first perspective (a) is merely a very general summary of the fact that all science and indeed all human thinking entails comparative processes: comparison is a universal mental operation. This perspective does not directly lead to a clear definition of comparative methodology[20].

The second perspective (b) puts aside the comparative approach as different from other research strategies. Within this point of view comparative research can include either one or several nations or cultures. So, also single-country or single-culture studies can be dealt with

[20] The work of Schriewer (1988) however shows that is feasible to develop such a definition of 'comparison' as a scientific method by contrasting it to the notion of comparison as a mental operation. It goes beyond the scope of this report to summarize his ideas.

following a comparative approach (see: e.g. Ragin, 1989). What is essential is not the cross-national scope of research, but the aims the researcher has with studying the research objects. In this view, 'comparison' does not follow from the research object, but from the researcher who explicitly or implicitly compares. This view is shared by many in cultural anthropology.

2.2.2 *'Comparative research equals cross-national research'*

The third perspective (c) entails that the comparative approach in the social sciences is the same as cross-national or cross-cultural research. This perspective is widely held in sociology. In this case, the 'comparison' results from the research object: since a social phenomenon is found in more than one country, research has to be 'comparative'. Kohn (1989b) underlines that cross-national research should be explicitly comparative, which he defines as 'studies that utilize systematically comparable data from two or more nations' (Kohn, 1989b, 20). Within this perspective, several shades can be distinguished concerning the degree to which the international context of a study should influence methodological decisions. Øyen (1990b) for example distinguishes between a 'puritan', an 'ignorant' and a 'totalist' point of view. It should be noted that in all these cases comparative studies essentially are seen as cross-national research.

The 'puritan' view is held by those who believe that 'conducting comparative research (...) is not different from any other kind of sociological research. Therefore they include no special discussion on problems encountered in cross-national studies, but refer to (...) methodological considerations involved in doing multi-level research' (Øyen, 1990b, 50). The 'ignorant' approach refers to the practice of those who conduct comparative research 'without ever giving a thought to the possibility that such comparisons may add to the complexity in interpreting the results of the study' (Øyen, 1990b, 50)[21]. The 'totalist' view is held by researchers who are very aware that they conduct comparative research and that specific problems are to be faced. However, they 'consciously ignore the many stumbling blocks of the non-equivalence of concepts, a multitude of unknown variables interacting in an unknown context and influencing the research in question in unknown ways' (Øyen, 1990b, 50). None of these three points of view adequately tackle the problems inherent to cross-national research. For Øyen, the solution to such problems lies in consciously reflecting upon the degree to which comparative studies are different from non-comparative research (Øyen, 1990b, 50). Indeed, a number of important contributions have been made by sociologists who argue that comparative research has distinctive characteristics, which results in a specific methodology that takes into account the fact that comparative research deals with more than one country or culture (Scheuch, 1968, 1990; Berting, 1979; Niessen and Peschar, 1982).

One example is the work of Berting (1979), who underlines that the 'purpose' of cross-national research is essential when making methodological decisions. Berting, using a classification of Scheuch (1968) first distinguishes between comparative studies that have the purpose of showing similarities between cultures and those aiming at showing differences. A second contrast refers to whether 'culture' is treated as an entity (analytic unit) or as the context (a set of conditions for units in analysis). Both distinctions have been proposed for nations (Kohn, 1989a) and there

[21] According to Øyen (1990b, 50) the custom of referring to research results or employing theories developed elsewhere and implanting these uncritically in one's own research is another example of such 'ignorant' practice.

seems little argument for not using them for regions. These two distinctions combined result in the following matrix (Table 1).

Table 1: Characterization of purpose of comparison and the unit of analysis (Source: adapted from Berting, 1979, 137)

purpose of comparison:	culture/nation/region as entity	culture/nation/region as context
show similarities	TYPE 1	TYPE 3
show differences	TYPE 2	TYPE 4

For all four types of comparative studies examples can be conceived. A 'type 1' study would be focusing on the political similarities between Germany and the USA, both being federal states. A 'type 2' study would aim at showing the differences between Western European and Japanese culture. In both studies nations or cultures would be treated as entities, on which the focus of comparison is directed.

A 'type 3' study would focus for example on the similarities between the legal arrangements for minority schooling in the Basque Country and Catalonia (regional law being the analytic unit), whereas the autonomous regions are regarded as the context. A 'type 4' study would try for example to show the differences between the system of pre-primary schooling (the analytic unit) in a number of different states. Explanations for these differences would be sought in the political arrangements within these states (context).

In general, it can be stated that several options exist when answering the question of what methodology is required when carrying out comparative research. These options depend upon how 'comparative research' is defined and in particular upon what the object of such research is. The next section addresses the object of comparative education, the field of most interest to Mercator-Education.

2.3 Comparative education

This section deals with defining the object of comparative education and includes some remarks on the internal diversity of the field 'comparative education'. The object and definition of comparative education has been addressed by many authors (cf. 1.3.2), among whom Halls (1990a), who divides the field in four themes: comparative studies, the study of an educational system abroad ('Auslandspädagogik'), international education and development education (cf. Halls, 1990a, 23). Two difficulties occur with this division. Firstly, the four themes are not mutually exclusive and, secondly, in this description 'comparison' is not an essential criterion.

Describing the object of comparative education thus appears to be troublesome. This has contributed neither to the flourishing of scholarship nor to the credibility of the field to others, including educational policy-makers and other practitioners. Halls remarks that 'the lack of a precise definition of the field of 'comparative education' has continued to block its development

(...). One difficulty arises from the appellation itself: 'comparative education' connotes above all comparison' (Halls, 1990a, 26).

Concerning the problem of what exactly constitutes 'comparative' in comparative education Halls claims that only a few studies within the field actually contain straight forward comparisons of two or more countries (Halls, 1990a, 27). According to Halls, though, studies of only one country may well be included, since: 'it is nevertheless true that papers written by non-nationals about other countries often give rise to implicit comparisons' (Halls, 1990a, 27). In this view, educational studies that have been written by foreigners are expected to have an implicit comparative view on education. According to Spolton (1968) it is almost impossible to conduct educational studies without making implicit comparisons:

> '(...) Once a first area has been studied, a second area study must be a comparative one, for either implicitly or explicitly, comparisons will be made with the first area. Only a pure statistical list could be truly objective and even then the categories chosen could be unconsciously comparative. Phrases like large classes, progressive practices, good facilities imply a standard of comparison. And since anyone writing about different educational systems must have been trained in at least one of them, then comparisons are inevitable. So, in a really practical sense, any study of a foreign system of education must be a comparative one' (Spolton, 1968, 110).

The discussion about the object of comparative education, and related to this its disciplinary status, has included two other important issues. The first is whether comparative education should focus on internal school issues, such as curriculum and school organisation or if also school-society relations should be included (cf. Kazamias and Schwartz, 1977; Kelly and Altbach, 1986). The second is whether the nation-state is most the appropriate entity of comparison. The focus of comparison may perhaps better be at the level of regions and local authorities or, instead, at the global level (Arnove, 1980; Halls, 1990a).

In the current study no attempt is made to summarize the different positions in the debate concerning the object and disciplinary status of comparative education, as the main focus here is the methodology of comparison. The following definition of comparative education is used in this study:

> 'comparative education is the study of education as a social phenomenon, aiming at the acquisition of knowledge of educational systems, policies and practices through comparison of different states, regions or historical periods'.

The research object of Mercator-Education, the position of lesser used languages in educational systems, falls within this discipline of comparative education. An important remark about comparative education has been made by Cowen (1980) who, describing the state of the art of European comparative education, states that: 'the intellectual definition of European comparative education is sharply different from that of American comparative education' (Cowen, 1980, 108). The distinction between the European and American traditions is firstly the fact that different objects of research have been on their agendas (Kelly, Altbach and Arnove, 1982). Secondly, and more important, the methodological orientation of European and American comparative education has not been unitary:

> 'The major founding fathers of European comparative education from the mid-twenties were working on themes which are comprehensible in terms of Durkheim, Weber, and Marx. The search for new methodological approaches in the United States and the confidence that American comparative educationists have had in positivist techniques drawn from other social sciences has meant that a field of study with a common name has diverged sharply' (Cowen, 1980, 108).

This methodological diversity has been described by many comparative educationists (e.g.: Cowen, 1980; Kelly, Altbach and Arnove, 1982; Altbach and Kelly, 1986a; Noah, 1988; Epstein, 1988; Altbach, 1991; Paulston, 1993).

2.4 Discussion

What can be learned from this chapter that is worthwhile for the comparative study of minority language education? It appears that no clearly delineated comparative methodology exists, although many social phenomena have been studied comparatively. Even the existence of a comparative discipline does not necessarily imply its distinct comparative methodology.

The ideas of comparative sociology concerning exactly what the 'comparative approach' entails have been diverse. Both the purpose of the study and the question of whether a study contains one or more states or regions appear to be critical. Also the issue of treating a nation/culture/region either as a unit of analysis or as context deserves consideration when starting comparative research. Does, for example, the regional educational policy towards minority languages figure as the focus of comparison or is it seen as a contextual factor in a comparative study of language curricula?

Comparative education as a field of study is of most interest to those studying European minority schooling. Within comparative education the problem of what precisely constitutes 'comparative' in the term 'comparative education' has been encountered. The study of one educational phenomenon in a foreign nation has been included in the definition of comparative education. A study of only one educational issue in one minority language region in Europe can therefore still be regarded as being part of comparative education. In the following chapter first the historical backgrounds of comparative education are described (3.1 and 3.2). Secondly, the current state of the field is addressed, with an emphasis on the prevailing concerns of comparative education (3.3). In Chapter 4 an attempt will be made to sketch some of the methodological
standpoints in the discussion about how to investigate educational systems and practices comparatively.

Chapter 3: Comparative education: history and current state

3.1 Historical development (before 1900): from travellers' tales to educational borrowing

3.1.1 Introduction

Of the several disciplines of the comparative social sciences, comparative education is of most interest to those nowadays studying minority schooling in different regions or countries. In order to comprehend the methodological frameworks (Chapter 4) and current analyses of minority education issues (Chapter 5) that comparative education has to offer, this Chapter gives an overview of the development of comparative education. The Chapter describes both the history of comparative education and the current state of the field. This overview is divided in three parts. In Section 3.1 the period before 1900 is described and in Section 3.2 the period between 1900 and 1960 is described. While in these Sections the historical backgrounds of comparative education are sketched, in Section 3.3 the focus shifts to the contemporary state of comparative education (1960–1990), with an emphasis on the prevailing concerns of the field. In Section 3.4. the Chapter is summarized and some observations are made concerning the value of comparative education for the study of the education of minorities.

Tracking down the date of birth of comparative education is not without difficulty. Some authors position the first conscious comparison of educational practices long before the nineteenth century (Lê Thành Khôi, 1981; Brickman, 1988; Wielemans, 1991). Brickman for example points to the activities of Xenophon, Cicero and Tacitus (Brickman, 1988). He also describes the Middle Ages and focuses on Ibn Khaldoun, whom he calls 'a real precursor of comparative education' (Brickman, 1988, 3). Especially the period after the Middle Ages though, with its many discoveries of new world regions and a growing popularity of travelling, witnessed an increase of studies of foreign cultures and education. Wielemans (1991) remarks that the best of these comparative studies – mainly from the sixteenth century onwards – can be 'classified under what the Germans call "Auslandspädagogik", which means: a commentary on another country, not entailing direct comparison with the writer's own country or people' (Wielemans, 1991, 3). These studies often were no more than personal travellers' tales:

> 'Many (...) travel reports, observations, and assessments of culture and education in one or more West European country were published during the [eighteenth, author] century. In general, they included sweeping statements and undocumented evaluations. However, they paved the road toward more objective study' (Brickmann, 1988, 5).

Modern comparative education devoted itself to this 'more objective study'. Prerequisites for the development of modern comparative education have been the establishment of the nation–state including a national system of educational provisions, administrated by national inspectorates (Wielemans, 1977, 2).

3.1.2 Modern comparative education: borrowing from abroad

Accounts of the history of modern comparative education tend to start with the work of the Frenchman Jullien (1775–1848): 'C'est de *l'Esquisse et vues préliminaires d'un ouvrage sur l'éducation comparée* par Marc Antoine Jullien en 1817, qu'on date généralement la naissance de cette science' (Lê Thành Khôi, 1981, 10). Jullien was a pioneer in the field of comparative

education. He thought that comparison and international cooperation as regards education would lead Europe into a peaceful future (Wielemans, 1977, 2-3). The objective study of differences and similarities between the national educational systems would enable man to formulate a theory of education on the basis of which countries would choose their common direction. Jullien was the first to:

> 'specify concretely an appropriate methodology for comparison, involving the use of standard questionnaires to collect information and arranging the findings into comprehensive tables so that differences in education among countries could be appreciated at a glance (...). His ultimate aim was as clear as his method: "to deduce true principles and determined rules so that education be transformed into an almost positive science"' (Epstein, 1988, 3).

To call him the founding father of modern comparative education therefore seems to be a prerogative of especially positivist comparative educationists (Epstein, 1988). His idea of comparative education as a positive science has inspired many. Other pioneers, however, were less concerned with the development of theory than with the transfer of educational ideas. The nineteenth century saw the establishment of national systems of education, combined with a withdrawing role in educational affairs for the Church. The arising emerging system was seen as an instrument for nation-building: the school was a medium for elevating and unifying the population. National governments found themselves confronted with the problem of how to provide effective public education for increasing numbers of children. They eagerly looked abroad for answers:

> 'Nineteenth-century scholar-administrators, entrusted with the task of guiding policy in order to build up new national education systems, began a modern tradition of studying schools outside their own country, thus reviving a practice that goes back in Western-Europe at least to Erasmus, and even to Plato himself' (Holmes, 1990, 69).

These modern comparative educationists intended to improve their own educational systems by borrowing educational practices and ideas from abroad. From this period date the melioristic goals of comparative education. Ever since, one of the motives for cross-national comparison has been the improvement of educational systems[22]. The nineteenth century's scholars took a firm interest in how foreign examples might contribute to reform in their own country:

> 'A frequent motive for the reports was to obtain a basis for educational reform. Thus, Victor Cousin of France studied education in Germany and Holland; Horace Mann of the US, schools in Prussia and elsewhere in Europe; Domingo Faustino Sarmiento of Argentina, in Europe and the US. The Japanese government sent delegations to study European and US education' (Brickmann, 1988, 5).

Other 'borrowers' were Thiersch from Germany and Arnold from England (Wielemans, 1977, 6). Especially Prussia and Austria were of interest to other countries since both had vastly expanded their public system of education during the eighteenth century. Wielemans (1977) states that none of these early comparativists thought that it was possible to transplant a whole system of education from one country to another (Wielemans, 1977, 5). Rather, they hoped to import some of the foreign practices and introduce them in the domestic system. Eckstein (1988)

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[22] Consider e.g. Phillips, D. (ed.) (1992): *Lessons of cross-national comparison in education*, Oxford Studies in Comparative Education, Volume 1. Phillips underlines the importance of cross-national comparison for domestic educational policy. He distinguishes in his introduction to this new series of publications 'two important questions in the study of comparative education' (Phillips, 1992, 9):
- *What lessons can be learned from cross-national studies of issues in education* [italics added]?
- What problems of comparative method do such studies have to address?

underlines their basic assumption, that only 'selected features of school administration, staffing, instructional methods, and curriculum could be imported into another country or grafted onto its developing system' (Eckstein, 1988, 7).

Apart from Jullien, the comparative educators of the nineteenth century can hardly be called 'scientific' comparativists. Wielemans points to the lack of systematization in their knowledge (Wielemans, 1977, 7). In general, they show little awareness of methodological problems and share a focus on description instead of explanation:

> 'Concerning the stage of "educational borrowing", we could conclude that most of the "educational travellers" were not concerned with methodology, nor with the problem of comparability' (Wielemans, 1991).
>
> '(...) Description was no problem. Each gave his account without caring whether they were in a scientific form' (Garcia Garrido, 1987, 31).

Yet, the descriptive reports of the school-administrators were often of high quality. Some authors were aware of the fact that they were investigating a foreign social phenomenon and that cross-national borrowing was not without difficulties. Arnold (1822-1888), for example, was a professor at Oxford as well as a school inspector who was sent to the European continent to describe educational systems as a preparation for domestic reform. He was possibly the first who, apart from describing features of the school system, paid attention to factors outside the school that should be taken into consideration when comparing educational systems (Wielemans, 1977, 6). The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth saw a further increase of the international transfer of, often progressive, practice-oriented educational ideas. Pestalozzi's pedagogical reforms brought interested educators to Switzerland. The ideas of e.g. Herbart, Montessori and Dalton inspired many abroad.

This descriptive, school-practice oriented and utilitarian approach of the nineteenth century was questioned by Sadler (1861-1943), who in his Oxford lecture titled *'How far can we learn anything of practical value from the study of foreign systems of education ?'* (1900) stated[23] that 'in studying foreign systems of education we should not forget that things outside the schools matter even more than things inside the schools, and govern and interpret the things inside' (cited in: Bereday, 1964b, 310). Sadler explicitly sought for explanation outside the educational system. In the first half of the twentieth century the central question for comparative education would be: what determines an educational system?

3.2 Historical development (1900-1960): what determines an educational system ?

3.2.1 The educational system as a whole

Whereas the nineteenth century comparative educationists were interested in specific parts of the educational system, especially internal school affairs such as curriculum and instructional practice, those from the first half of the twentieth century, to begin with Sadler, shifted their attention to the school system as a whole, viewed as an integral component of the larger society. Instead of collecting information about foreign practices for domestic use, the main goal of comparative study became the explanation of the differences between educational systems:

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[23] This essay has been much referred to in comparative education. It was reprinted, with a few minor deletions, in February 1964, in *Comparative Education Review*, 307-314.

> 'Sadler was the first to throw doubt (...) on the usefulness of simply collecting facts and information about foreign educational experiences. If it was wished really to benefit, culturally and politically, from these descriptions, it was necessary to explore in greater depth the "intangible and impalpable spiritual strength" which determined and supported systems of instruction. For him, description was totally necessary but not sufficient. To it should be added *explanation* to which, because of its special difficulty, should be dedicated most of the efforts of the comparative investigator' (Garcia Garrido, 1987, 31).

The explanation of the differences between educational systems was looked for in the larger society. The educational system was seen as an integral component of the society; to study a country's educational system implied investigating its unique historical and cultural environment. This period is characterized by the increase of theory development: several comparative educators built a comprehensive theoretical framework.

3.2.1 The quest for explanation: historical and cultural determinants

Kandel (1881–1965) taught at Columbia University in New York and strongly influenced the growth of comparative education in the United States of America. He was involved in the study of practical educational problems worldwide and published the Educational Yearbook in the 1920s and 1930s. His main works are *'Comparative education'* (Boston, 1933) and *'The new era in education: a comparative study'* (Cambridge, 1955). Two important notions are central in Kandel's theoretical framework. The first is 'national character'; the second is 'idealism'. According to Kandel educational phenomena could be explained by external causes, as he felt 'that an educational system was determined by factors and forces outside the school and that education could not be understood in isolation from the political, economic, and cultural context in which it functioned' (Kazamias and Schwartz, 1977, 155).

To grasp these surroundings of the educational system Kandel introduced the concept of 'national character', which he defined as a whole of forces that ensures the solidarity of a group of people. It consists of common ideas, ideals and beliefs and is strengthened by a common territory, government or political organisation to which people feel themselves connected (cf: Wielemans, 1977, 8). The features of an educational system originate from this national character. It is clear that for Kandel the main focus of comparative education is the nation–state:

> 'His units of analysis were national systems of education: English, German, French, Russian. He was explicit about the fact that schools and educational practice were influenced by national traditions, national political ideologies, and national character. In his own words: "Each national system of education is characteristic of the nation which has created it and expresses something peculiar to the group which constitutes that nation: to put it in another way, each nation has the educational system that it desires or that it deserves" (Kazamias and Schwartz, 1977, 156).

Kandel's leading consideration, when comparing educational systems, was the comparison of ideals:

> '"what do we compare ?" he asked in 1956 and responded: "The answer should be that the comparison is of ideas, ideals and forms". He automatically assumed that men's actions are determined by their thoughts, and he consistently sought to grasp "the hidden meaning of things found in the schools"' (Kazamias and Schwartz, 1977, 154–155).

His idealistic orientation and use of the notion of 'national character' resulted in philosophical–historical analyses of the distinct cultural traditions of nation–states. National school systems as

such were considered unique. The knowledge produced by these analyses has been called humanistic rather than scientific: they aimed at insight in human development.

Kandel was not alone in his search for factors outside the school that would explain what happened in the classroom. Other comparative educators who shared his view were e.g. Hans (1888–1969) and Schneider (1881–1974). Hans taught at King's College in London and, like Kandel, attempted to enumerate, categorize and analyze all the factors influencing the development of a particular national system of education. The title of his main work shows how Hans saw the task of comparative education: *Comparative education: a study of educational factors and traditions* (1961). Hans underlined, even more than Kandler, the historical development of an educational system. This development was determined by factors he subdivided in natural factors (such as language, race, geography and economy), religious factors (Catholic, Anglican and Puritan traditions) and worldly factors (democracy, humanism, socialism, nationalism). In his studies Hans paid most attention to the formal structure of a national educational system and its administrative functioning.

Schneider was an Austrian who taught at the University of Munich and founded the multilingual 'Internationale Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft'. His two most influential works are *Triebkräfte der Pädagogik der Völker* (1947) and *Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft* (1961). Like Kandel and Hans, Schneider distinguishes a large number of factors (Triebkräfte) that influence educational development, among others: national character, geographical surroundings, economy, science, culture and foreign influences. 'National character' can be roughly defined as a 'Denkstil' typical a for a distinct nation: a unitary way of approaching reality with its own pattern, vocabulary and intellectual products. Schneider was able to distinguish a German, English and French 'national character'. Unlike his contemporaries Schneider also distinguishes internal factors. These can be described as 'reactions' of the educational system to external factors that, in turn, have their own influence on the further development of the educational system (cf. Wielemans, 1977, 11).

Despite the differences between their individual approaches considerable methodological unity can be detected in the works of Hans, Schneider and Kandel. During the first half of the twentieth century comparative education was dominated by their approach, which can be summarized as historical and rather deterministic:

> 'All three pioneers wished to describe educational systems and their historical growth, wanted to discover the principles which inform all national systems and hoped to explain differences between them. Each used a taxonomy of "factors" or "forces" to classify data and explain why things were as they were (...). They collected data and explained national systems and the differences between them in the light of *historical cultural causes* [italics added] (Holmes, 1977, 115).

Holmes underlines the importance of these three comparative educationists in the further development of the field:

> 'All three men had a world-wide influence on the post-war development of comparative education. Hans worked with Joseph Lauwerys in London and inspired a new generation of comparativists. Kandel's influence was widely disseminated in the U.S.A. and elsewhere (...). Schneider's influence can be detected in the work of practically all German comparative educationists' (Holmes, 1977, 115).

This influence has been strong especially because of the fact that all three held important teaching positions. The theoretical bearing of their work can be seen in the more recent contributions of especially Bereday (1964) and, to a lesser extent, King (1967). Since the 1960s,

however, comparative education has not engaged itself extensively in broad theory development. Rather, the post-war development of comparative education has shown a decrease of the historical and theoretical approach of comparativists such as Hans, Schneider and Kandler. Instead, comparative education has focused on the study of contemporary practical educational problems, which are in general approached using non-historical methods.

3.3 The current state of comparative education (1960-1990)

3.3.1 The 1960s: optimism and educational aid

Comparative education was introduced as a separate discipline in American and European universities during the 1950s. In American and British university curricula it became one of the 'foundations of education' courses, next to e.g. history of education and philosophy of education. In the USA the field grew to become more or less dominated by sociologists. The post-war decade saw a growing interest in the possibilities of international cooperation. In this context, the role of education in improving international understanding was discussed. Comparative education increasingly institutionalized. Many educational policy-makers looked, again, to other countries to find models for domestic reforms such as restructuring secondary education. In this setting comparative education flourished, supported by several decades of theory development:

> 'The year 1960 has been cited as one crucial, albeit approximate date. By then pioneers in the field – Sadler, Kandel, Roselló, Schneider, Hans, to name only a few – had already carried out their seminal studies. Comparative educationists still often wrote in terms of 'driving forces,' (...), national factors' and the like, although others such as Lauwerys were already advocating a more 'scientific' approach. By 1960 the first association of comparative scholars had been established, the North American Comparative Education Society, and a European society was already mooted. A new take-off in comparative studies, with new methods and a new content, was possible. The world had recovered from the cataclysm of war, academics had reforged contacts broken for decades, faith in education as a social and economic regenerator was beginning its brief (...) reign' (Halls, 1990b, 12).

Halls, who observes that some of the most important methodological contributions to comparative education were also published in the 1960s, calls this period 'the decade of optimism' and states that it was 'an era of travel and observation. Americans visited the USSR to study what they termed the 'changing Soviet school' (...). Educators from Eastern Europe came to look at British boarding schools. UNESCO was beginning to send its educational missions all over the world (Halls, 1990b, 12).

During the 1960s indeed a hopeful view on the educational system, thought to contribute to educational growth, modernity and political stability around the world, was held by politicians and academics. When the former colonies in Africa and Asia gained their political independence, comparative educationists were asked to advise on the development of educational systems in these countries that were soon jointly called the Third World. This was the start of 'international development education' (Halls, 1990b, 13). The newly independent states in Africa and Asia often inherited the educational system of their former colonizer and turned to expert-foreigners for recommendations with regard to educational change. As a result, comparative educators in bilateral cooperation programs or international organisations such as the World Bank and UNESCO engaged themselves vigorously in the transfer of educational ideas and practices:

> 'Traditionally the field has been oriented toward the study of foreign educational systems as a means of domestic reform. Research was usually conducted by nationals of the country for which

> such reforms were slated. The 1960s witnessed foreign nationals engaged in the export of educational reforms to other countries' (Kelly, Altbach and Arnove, 1982, 516).

3.3.2 Educational reform as a main concern

During the 1970s and 1980s educational development in the Third World remained one of the central concerns of comparative education. Yet, constant educational changes in e.g. North America, Western Europe, China and the former socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe have also been on the agenda of comparative education (Halls, 1990a). Cowen (1990) claims that educational renewal has become the major issue in comparative education, stating that 'the problems of reconstruction and educational reform were to be the major replacement of the strategic concern for "forces and factors", so important in the academic definitions of European comparative education emerging between the First and Second World Wars' (Cowen, 1990, 336).

Meanwhile, comparative education as a field of study has been able to arrive at a global view on education, as nowadays: 'no continent or country does not have at least a number of officials and a few academics who are looking at education beyond their own confines' (Halls, 1990b, 14). Concerning the content of comparative education studies, Halls (1990a) quotes Postlethwaite, who claims that: 'there seems hardly to be a domain of education where "comparative educators" have not dared to tread' (Halls, 1990a, 44). In the early 1980s Postlethwaite enumerated the following themes as a research agenda for comparative education: economics of education, educational planning and policy, pre-school education, teaching and teacher education, curriculum, educational statistics, higher education, non-formal education, adult education and, finally, human development (cf. Halls, 1990a, 44).

This list is definitely not exhaustive. Halls points to the fact that the content of comparative studies is remarkably varied and is in general determined by geographical, cultural and ideological considerations (Halls, 1990a, 44). Concerning the question of whether one single tradition in European comparative education exists, Edwards, Jütte and Renkema (1991) claim that the substantive concerns of European comparative education have not been unitary (Edwards, Jütte and Renkema, 1991, 7). Due to the notion of improving education through comparison, the agenda of comparative education has been drafted in large part by policy demands. Thus, European comparative educators have focused on those issues that were relevant for educational policy-making in their home country, such as democratisation of education and equal access to education. One of these issues certainly has also been the problem of minority schooling. Hardly any state can be regarded as monolingual or monocultural, due to both the existence of indigenous minorities and the arrival of immigrant groups. Therefore, comparative education has engaged itself extensively with the education of minorities (see: Chapter 5).

3.4 Discussion

Modern comparative education originates from the late 18th. century. School administrators began to study educational ideas and practices abroad in order to improve their domestic school system. They focused on the description of school practice and were interested in borrowing elements of a foreign educational system. The comparative educationists of the first half of the 20th century were much more engaged in explaining the similarities and differences between the educational systems of countries. Their main interest was the whole of forces and factors

influencing the school system. Their main focus of comparison was the entire national school system, expressing the 'national character' of a nation-state. After the Second World War the orientation of comparative education shifted to educational reform both in developing countries and in industrialised countries.

Two aspects in the history of comparative education appear as important to observe for the study of minority language education. The first is the melioristic aspirations of comparative education: traditionally, many have seen the comparative study of education as a means towards improving education at home. The idea of borrowing educational innovations dates back to the 18th century. Nowadays, this idea is still present in studies of minority language education. The rationale of many studies is: what can we learn from the way minority schooling is organised elsewhere? The improvement of minority schooling is for example also one of the reasons for the study visit program, organised by the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages. It should be noted, however, that the possibility of borrowing or transferring educational practices from abroad has also been questioned, viewing the significance given by comparative educationists to the specific environment of such an educational phenomenon. The feasibility of 'importing' educational practices from other minority regions is doubtful. In other words: implementing existing ideas for minority language education in one region will undoubtedly imply the adaptation of those ideas to new circumstances in another.

The second aspect that appears as important is the fact that comparative education as a field has for a long time viewed the national system of education as the main focus of study. For a long time, the concept of a uniform nation-state has informed the agenda of comparative education. Regions have been absent and minority languages and cultures have been ignored. The idea that regions within states may also be worth studying appeared not earlier than in the second half of the 20th century. To study regional systems of education implies that the national system of education is not any longer the unit of comparison, but becomes a part of the context.

The conclusion of this Chapter is that the present state of comparative education is one of diversity. After ca. 150 years modern comparative education has become a global field of study that addresses a wide variety of issues, including the education of indigenous and immigrant minorities. Nowadays, educationists on all continents conduct comparative studies relevant to their own and, to a lesser extent, foreign educational systems. Their objects are studied with the aid of several methodological frameworks. These are dealt with in the next Chapter.

Chapter 4: Methodology of comparative education

4.1 Introduction: increasing diversity

This Chapter outlines the methodological orientations of comparative education. Within the field of comparative education no unitary view on methodology exists. In 1977, after twenty years of growing institutionalization and continuous methodological debate, Kazamias and Schwartz remarked that 'there is no internally consistent body of knowledge, no set of principles or canons of research that are generally agreed upon by people who associate themselves with the field' (Kazamias and Schwartz, 1977, 151). The 1980s witnessed a growing fragmentation of the methodological orientations within comparative education[24]. In 1986 Altbach and Kelly edited a compilation of articles on comparative education as a field of study (Altbach and Kelly, 1986b). In the introduction Altbach and Kelly state:

> 'Since 1977 the field of comparative education has broadened its research orientation. As some of the essays in this book indicate, there is no one method of study in the field; rather, the field increasingly is characterized by a number of different research orientations. No longer are there attempts to define a single methodology of comparative education, and none of our contributors argues that one single method be defined as a canon' (Altbach and Kelly, 1986a, 1).

This situation is very different from the methodological agreement between the early comparative educationists. As was shown in Section 3.3, comparative educationists such as Kandel, Hans and Schneider were confident about the possibilities and limits of comparison. They agreed that in order to be able to compare educational systems adequately it was necessary to investigate thoroughly their respective historically and culturally determined national environments. Hence, 'comparability' would be warranted (cf. Wielemans, 1991, 6–7).

In an earlier era, methodological considerations concerning the comparison of educational practices were scarce (cf. 3.2). The educational borrowers, with the exception of Jullien, were not concerned with the problems of comparability. Jullien, however, proposed the use of an instrument that would produce reliable and comparable data from the diverse national educational systems involved. The questionnaire proposed would enable the comparative educationist to construct a table, in order to attain an overall view of the educational situation in the systems compared. In this view, 'comparability is guaranteed by an instrument of observation, such as (...) questionnaires which will provide for an activity of objective comparison' (Wielemans, 1991, 4).

This idea, the establishment of 'comparability' by means of reliable instrumentation, has dominated thinking about methodology in comparative education for a long time[25]. International

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[24] Nowadays, in the 1990s, this fragmentation has not decreased. Paulston (1993), relating to post-modernism, claims: 'Over the past several decades, knowledge constructs in comparative education, as in related fields, have become increasingly diverse and fragmented. (...) Today, no one world view or way of knowing can claim to fill all the space of vision or knowledge' (Paulston, 1993, 101).

[25] It should be noted that the use of the term 'comparability' is not without problems. Often it is used to indicate that it is difficult to compare data from diverse settings. In such a situation, apparently something should be done to 'heighten' the 'comparability' of these data. There is, however, no unitary definition of 'comparability'; dictionaries such as *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology* (1985) and *Dictionary of Psychology* (1985) do not include the term. In *The Pocket Dictionary of Current English* (1984) the meaning of the word (in daily use) can be deduced from 'comparable' ('that which can be compared'). Following this meaning, 'comparability' is the degree to which two or more objects can be compared. This definition refers back to these objects; confusion with 'likeness' or 'similarity' is easy. For an analysis of the problem of what 'comparability' actually is, see Farrell (1986, 208–214) and Raivola (1986).

organisations, such as UNESCO and the International Bureau of Education, have developed elaborated taxonomies of data required to describe educational systems. Questionnaires based on these taxonomies would deliver well-organized information from the countries involved, ready for comparison. As a result, regularities and irregularities would appear, after which principles and generalizations would be easily derived.

As such, this idea is positivistic: knowledge is considered 'scientific' only if it is derived 'directly' from reality through the use of empirically verifiable methods. In this view, scientific theories are established through inductive reasoning. The positivist view on methodology in comparative education is discussed in Section 4.2. Next to positivism, other views on methodology in comparative education have been elaborated, especially during the late 1960s and 1970s[26]. Following the discussion of positivism in Section 4.2, some other positions are dealt with: cultural relativism and phenomenology (4.3), the problem-solving approach (4.4) and the case-study approach (4.5). This division has been adapted from Epstein (1988).

The remainder of this Chapter addresses a number of methodological approaches in comparative education. A number of notes are made beforehand. First, several ways of discussing methodologies may be distinguished. In this study, some 'schools of thought' are presented separately. This, however, is only one option. Others include e.g. a historical overview (cf. Chapter 3) or a presentation of individual comparative studies that can be considered representative for an approach. Second, discussions of methodological issues always reveal a subjective position[27]. The way in which methodological positions are categorized, for example, already implies a judgment about how these positions relate to each other. It should be noted that in this study only the rudimentary features of methodological approaches are described. Little space for subtlety is allowed. Therefore, developments within one paradigm are hardly at all dealt with.

A related issue is the fact that 'behind all current methodologies (...) lies a more or less clear and, explicit ideology' (Garcia Garrido, 1987, 35). Epstein has thoroughly analyzed the ideological orientations of three major positions: neo-positivism, neo-relativism and neo-marxism (Epstein, 1986). His analysis has provoked debate (for an overview, refer to: Epstein, 1987). The ideological backgrounds of the methodologies discussed, however, are not dealt with in this study. Rather, the analysis focuses on how 'comparison' is understood within the competing paradigms.

It should be noted that the four paradigms presented are not all methodological positions nowadays present in comparative education. Paulston (1993), for example, identifies no less than 21 'branching theories' that he reduces to four major 'root paradigms'[28]. There is no doubt, however, that for a long time positivism has been the dominant approach in comparative

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[26] 'By the early 1970s, functionalist theory and positivist methods had achieved the status of orthodoxy in comparative and international education studies at the same time as they came under attack in the social sciences and in the development studies from a combination of emergent critical and interpretive knowledge communities' (Paulston, 1993, 103).

[27] The question has been raised of whether it is possible to discuss problems of comparative methodology separate from the (subjective) epistemological meaning of 'comparison'; consider White (1978), who relating to comparative methodology, argued that: 'Methodology may not wisely be considered independently of the context of the conceptual framework of the person using the methodology' (White, 1978, 94).

[28] Paulston (1993) distinguishes the following four 'root paradigms': functionalism, radical functionalism, humanism and radical humanism.

education[29]. Finally, this Chapter is more concerned with the method of comparison than with the object of comparison. The position of minority languages in the school curriculum is but one object that can be studied by means of the methodological framework described.

4.2 The dominant approach: positivism

4.2.1 Positivist methods and functionalist theory

Jullien's plea for the development of comparative education as 'an almost positive science' has not remained without effect[30]. Epstein (1988) calls positivism 'the field's mainstream tradition', Paulston (1993) refers to positivism and functionalism as 'orthodoxy' and also Kelly and Altbach (1986; 1988) characterise functionalism as the leading paradigm[31].

To a certain extent positivism and functionalism in comparative education draw on the work of Kandel, Hans and Schneider. As they did, positivists and functionalists regard the educational system as an integrated part of society. In the positivism/functionalism paradigm education is seen as a societal sub-system that operates as an indispensable part of the larger society. The education system facilitates the effective functioning of the larger society[32]. Knowledge of this sub-system can be derived solely through empirical methods. Positivists have therefore been remarkably critical of the 'unscientific' and subjective analyses of educational systems by theorists such as Kandel. During the 1960s:

> 'a number of scholars (...) began to question the data base of the field and to argue for the establishment of an articulated set of scientific canons as a basis of research. They argued that much of the previous research was based on fragmentary data and eyewitness accounts and that studies could not be replicated (...). The thrust of these arguments was that comparative education had to move beyond its impressionistic past (...). In short, scholars began to demand a *science* of comparative education (Kelly, Altbach and Arnove, 1982, 510).

Several authors have contributed to the development of this positivist paradigm, which sees the epistemological and methodological notions used in the natural sciences as a model for comparative education. Most prominent contributions to comparative education from this

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[29] Welch (1993) claims that: 'contemporary comparative education is in a state of flux. It lacks its former methodological ebullience, which was based to a substantial extent on the tenets of positivism; meanwhile, cultural certainties are shrinking in the face of international changes' (Welch, 1993, 22).

[30] Quote of Jullien from: Epstein (1988), *The problematic meaning of 'comparison' in comparative education*, 3 (cf. Epstein, 1988).

[31] Positivism and functionalism are two concepts with different meanings. Those who adhere to positivism are convinced that it is possible to gain knowledge of the empirical reality by means of certain (scientific) procedures: this is their epistemological position. Most of the positivist social scientists have a functionalist view on the relation between social phenomena and the larger society, e.g. the function of the educational system within the larger society. Therefore positivism and functionalism seem very much entwined.

[32] For an example of this idea of functionalism in comparative education, consider Carey (1966) who distinguishes five sub-systems of a sociocultural system, of which the educational system is one.

paradigm have been made by Noah and Eckstein[33], Farrell[34] (1970, 1986), Lê Thành Khôi (1981, 1986), Postlethwaite[35] and, finally, Psacharopoulos.[36]

Of special interest to positivists/functionalists have been the relationships between the educational sub-system and others, such as the political and economic sub-systems. Questions such as the correlations between schooling and economic growth (human capital theories) and the contribution of political socialisation to social stability were studied (for an overview see e.g. Kelly, Altbach and Arnove, 1982; Saha and Fägerlind, 1983). Using the overall concept of 'modernization' comparative education thus strongly influenced the post-war diffusion of Western educational ideas in developing countries.

4.2.2 Towards a general theory of education

In general, the post-war development of positivism in comparative education resembles that in the social sciences as a whole. Positivist comparative educationists aim to obtain knowledge of international educational phenomena in a way similar to the natural sciences, by formulating, testing and adopting or rejecting law-like statements. They have a strong adherence to objectivity (cf. Noah and Eckstein, 1969, 99-100). They increasingly use quantitative methods and statistical techniques, especially multivariate analysis, at the same time displaying a low confidence in history and culture as explanatory factors:

> 'The modern tendency in comparative studies is: (a) to place primacy on the careful identification, validation, and measurement of variables; (b) to show the relationships among those variables within each country ; (c) to compare cross-nationally the direction, size, and confidence levels

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[33] In the late 1960s Noah and Eckstein strongly pleaded for a 'scientific' approach in comparative education. Their view on how such a scientific approach should be developed, is expressed in Noah and Eckstein (1969) and Eckstein and Noah (1969).

[34] Also Farrell (1970, 1986) states that comparative education should be using a 'scientific' method. He sees the object of comparative education as the development of a theory of education through comparison: 'I shall assume that the object of comparative education is to *compare*, to systematically apply data from several units in order to test relationships between variables, in order to build theory about how educational systems operate' (Farrell, 1970, 269). According to Farrell comparative education does not need a specific methodology, but should rely on (quantitative) methods used in the social sciences: 'A basic assumption of my argument is that there is no such thing as comparative methodology. There are *comparative data*, to which a variety of analytical tools may be applied, the whole enterprise being constrained by the requirements of the *scientific method*' (Farrell, 1986, 202-203).

[35] Postlethwaite has, with Husén, been engaged in the IEA Study, a large scale international study on the educational achievement of pupils in several school subjects. IEA meanwhile includes nearly 40 countries. The main goal is the gathering of quantitative data on learning outcomes, to be used for international comparison. The IEA Study approach is psychometric, involving the use of international tests to measure pupils' learning attainment. Postlethwaite has reported on the IEA Study in e.g.: Postlethwaite, T.N. (1974) Target populations, sampling, instrument construction and analysis procedures. *Comparative education review*, 18 (1), 164-179, and: Postlethwaite, T.N. (1987) Comparative educational achievement research: can it be improved? *Comparative education review*, 31 (1), 150-158.

[36] The analyses of Psacharopolous have been dominated by a quantitative, economic approach to education. His focus is on educational planning. Examples of his views can be found in e.g.: Psacharopolous, G. (1978) Economic implications of raising the school leaving age. *Comparative education review*, 22 (1), 71-79, and: Psacharopolous, G. (1986) The planning of education: where do we stand? *Comparative education review*, 30 (4), 560-573.

> of statistics measuring these relationships; and (d) to rely upon such factors as 'national character', or 'historical background' for explanation and generalization only when the introduction of additional variables yields no gain in explanatory power' (Noah, 1988, 12).

This approach fundamentally sees comparison as the essential means of developing 'a grand theory of education' that holds in diverse contexts. For the comparative study of minority schooling, this would mean that the aim of study is to formulate a general theory of minority language education. Such a theory would explain, in a universal way, the functioning of minority schooling, abstracted from its actual forms and shapes in minority language regions.

So, according to positivists, it is possible, (exclusively) by means of the comparison of educational phenomena from various settings to formulate generalized statements (laws) about the universal functioning of education:

> 'Comparative education uses data from one or more countries or regions (a) to describe educational systems, processes, or outcomes; (b) to assist in the development of educational institutions and practices; (c) to throw light on the relationships between education and society; and (d) *to establish generalized statements about education that are valid for more than one country* [italics added] (Noah, 1988, 10).

> 'A truly general theory of education would be based on an in-depth study of reciprocal relations between education and society in different types of historical civilizations (...) The goal of such an undertaking would be to arrive at a formulation of *laws*: laws that would not have the validity of those generated in experimental sciences but that would express relatively constant relationships in space and time' (Lê Thành Khôi, 1986, 217).

> 'As I have argued (...), comparative data are essential to establishing the credibility of our theories, and hence of our explanations. Since we have little in the way of credible theory regarding education, most of our 'explanations' are partial and unverified (...). Comparative data do not simply enrich the explanation of single-country findings. Without them there cannot be adequate explanation. I am suggesting, then, that *there can be no generalizing scientific study of education which is not the comparative study of education*' (Farrell, 1986, 207-208).

Formulations such as these indicate clearly how positivists define 'comparison'. It is 'the cross-national method of discovering invariant relationships between education and aspects of society to (...) throw light on processes abstracted from time and even apart from conceptions of (evolutionary) stages' (Epstein, 1988, 4-5). For cultural relativism and phenomenology this definition of comparison, with its nomothetic generalizing connotations, is inappropriate.

4.3 Cultural relativism and phenomenology

4.3.1 Cultural relativism: displaying the unique

Comparative educationists working within a relativistic or phenomenological paradigm do not believe that generalizations through comparison are possible or desirable. Their views on what 'comparison' exactly is, and what it should aim for, differ strongly with positivistic ideas. Epstein (1988) has noted that their idiographic explanations, which examine the circumstances that differentiate particular events from others, stand in direct contrast to the nomothetic explanations of positivist science (cf. Epstein, 1988, 7).

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Cultural relativism and phenomenology share this focus on idiographic explication and are subsequently dealt with here. 'Cultural relativism' is rooted in cultural anthropology[37], and has as its central idea the uniqueness of cultures, nations and events. Cultural anthropologists, in this view, aim to 'record particularities of individual cultures and show the variability among them' (Epstein, 1988, 8). They have an antipathy towards building a theory that explains such particularities, as they consider individual cultures as intrinsically unique. So, no 'general theory of cultural development' is aimed for. The purpose of conducting cross-cultural research lies rather in demonstrating the diversity of cultural characteristics and, through this demonstration, reducing ethnocentrism.

Comparative educationists who have worked in the relativist paradigm include Mallinson and King[38]. Yet, already in the earlier work of Kandel, Schneider, Hans and Sadler[39] relativist tendencies can be traced, since they all referred to notions such as 'national character' in order to show the uniqueness of a school system. Epstein remarks that 'cultural relativism (...) in comparative education is usually displayed by an adherence to some variation of the concept 'national character'' (Epstein, 1988, 6).

The concept of national character entails uniqueness. The main task of the comparative educator, in this view, is to demonstrate the uniqueness of foreign schools, tied as they are to the cultural context in which they function[40]. Mallinson, for example, sees the comparative study of foreign schools as:

> '(...) a process of gaining knowledge about foreign schools in order to gain a better understanding of one's own system. Only by seeing the *uniqueness* [italics added] in the way others carry on education can one genuinely appreciate the *distinctiveness* [italics added] of education at home. But (...) focus must not simply be on schools, but [on] the particular cultural contexts that account for their distinctiveness' (Epstein, 1988, 9).

The similarity between this way of defining comparison and the goals of relativist cultural anthropologists is remarkable. To comparative educationists, in this view, the study of foreign schools is a way of displaying the various forms that education can have in diverse cultural and

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37 In cultural anthropology especially the ideas of Boaz, Kroeber, Benedict and Mead have been labelled as cultural relativism. They all doubted the possibility of generalizations about cultures, nations or historical events. Rather, cultural anthropology should involve itself with showing the unique attributes of different cultures. 'Relativism' refers to the notion that assessments of cultures are always assessment relative to some standard or other, and all standards derive from cultures (cf. Jarvie, I.C. (1983) Rationality and relativism. *British Journal of Sociology*, 34, 45). Cultures, in this viewpoint, are therefore principally equal: no assessments can be made regarding their relative 'advancement' or 'development' (as in an evolutionary idea of 'stages of development').

38 Their ideas on how comparative education should approach cross-national comparison of schools is elaborated in: King, E.J. (1967) *Other schools and ours: a comparative study for today*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, and: Mallinson, V. (1975) *An introduction to comparative education*. London: Heinemann.

39 Another early relativistic comparative educationist is the Frenchman Cousin, a contemporary of Jullien, who spoke of the 'indestructible unity of our national character' (cited in: Epstein, 1988, 9).

40 Consider Kandel's view of how a system of education is linked to the unique cultural attributes of a nation: 'Each national system of education is characteristic of the nation which has created it and expresses something peculiar to the group which constitutes that nation: to put it in another way, each nation has the educational system that it desires or that it deserves' (Cited in : Kazamias and Schwartz, 1977, 156).

historical settings. Comparative educationists working within this paradigm see schools as being fitted into their specific cultural and historical 'habitat'[41]. They underline the particular attributes of a school system. In this view a comparative study of minority language education would aim at the description of its unique features which are a product of particular circumstances. The pattern of minority schooling in a particular region is explained by referring to specific historical and cultural causes.

Unlike positivistic researchers, the goal of these comparativists is not to develop a 'grand theory of education' (through comparison), but rather to show the diversity of educational models and practices (through comparison). Put in another way: relativism employs the comparative method to grasp the unique character of schools (cf. Epstein, 1988, 10).

'Comparison' therefore has very distinct connotations to positivistic and relativistic comparative educationists. Epstein remarks that:

> 'For the relativist 'comparison' is not a generalizing process, but a method to discover cultural absolutes, in marked contrast to the 'comparative method' used by positivists. (...) For positivists the very purpose is to generalize across the boundaries of cultures' (Epstein, 1988, 8)[42].

4.3.2 Phenomenology: analysing the micro-level

Phenomenologists share the focus on the particularities of educational phenomena. But, more strongly than cultural relativists, they object to the study of educational 'facts'. To phenomenologists education is a truly human endeavour. Like other human activities, it requires inquiry appropriate for the nature of this object. The proper study of social phenomena can not be deduced from that of the natural sciences. Social 'reality' is constructed by participants in social interaction, based on interpretation. It therefore can not be studied as a 'real' object, separated from this interaction:

> 'Unlike physical objects social phenomena are 'real' only in so far as we organize our activities in such a way as to routinely confirm to their real existence; they have no innate 'real' properties, no real parts, experience no real changes and no causality' (Epstein, 1988, 11).

As a consequence, the 'availability' of social phenomena for scientific inquiry becomes highly problematic (cf. Epstein, 1988, 12). Phenomenology 'rejects the positivist assumption of an empirical social world constructed essentially of a preconstituted field of objects awaiting explication and whose existence is independent of the processes through which it is studied and

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[41] Consider for example King's analyses of the educational systems of France and the United States of America, which are rooted in traditions of respectively rationalism/intellectualism and technology/commerce (cf. Epstein, 1988, 10). For King the: 'proper study of comparative education must be grounded on a sympathetic description-with-analysis of all that adds up to education in (...) one cultural whole' (cited in: Epstein, 1988, 10).

[42] Or, in other words, the difference is between underlining the general as opposed to the particular: 'Positivist scholars examine invariant relationships that transcend the boundaries of particular societies. Relativists focus on the particularities of cultures as these are linked to the idiosyncrasies of national systems of education' (Epstein, 1988, 10).

understood' (Epstein, 1988, 12). In other words: social reality itself and knowledge derived from this reality are both human constructs[43].

In comparative education this phenomenological approach has been advocated by e.g. Barber (1972), Heyman (1979), Masemann (1986)[44] and Kneller[45]. Barber (1972) fiercely criticises positivism in comparative education[46], which he refers to as 'methodologism'. According to Barber positivists have misconceived the meaning of 'science':

> 'This common misconception identifies science with methodology and thus presumes that reliability, precision, and certitude can be attained by the dutiful application of specified methods and techniques – *irrespective of the nature of the subject under study* [italics added] (Barber, 1972, 425).

Barber underlines that such 'methodology' can not be prescriptive for social research, as it is merely a (descriptive) reconstruction of how some scientists have worked, especially in the natural sciences[47]. In this view, science is merely what scientists do, and therefore: 'there is no one correct methodology, only a series of distinctive logics-in-use for a variety of different types of inquiry' (Barber, 1972, 425). For the inquiry of social phenomena this means that no examples of scientific labour can be found in the natural sciences, such as biology or physics. Barber approvingly cites Kaplan: '(...) Behavioral sciences should stop trying to imitate only what a particular reconstruction claims physics to be' (cited in: Barber, 1972, 425).

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[43] Or rather: the first is a construct, while the latter is a 'construct of a construct'. Consider: 'Whereas the social world as observed by the researcher is constructed by the individuals who comprise it, a process that may be described as first-order construction, that world is not susceptible to detached analysis because the interpretational relevance of particular facts and events cannot be determined from outside. (...) Positivists must rely on second-order constructs – (...) constructs of constructs – which they form based on their common-sense *interpretations* [italics added] of the world. 'Scientific' knowledge, as looked for by positivists, is therefore a 'construct of a construct'. The phenomenological approach to social events, according to which the world can only be 'understood in terms of its existential subjectivity' (Epstein, 1988, 12), has been elaborated by especially Husserl and Schütz.

[44] Masemann (1986) regards the social and cultural context of micro-analyses of interaction as highly important. She proposes critical ethnographic studies that also keep in mind the larger society and make cross-national comparison possible.

[45] Kneller criticized the positivistic contribution to comparative education of Farrell (1986, published earlier in 1979) in a 'letter to the editor' in *Comparative Education Review* (Kneller, G.F. (1980) The salience of science and the problem of comparability: another view. *Comparative Education Review*, 24 (1), 109–113). He argues: 'If what I have said – on the issue of comparability and the nature of science – is correct, it follows that education is not a science (...). What is it then? *Education essentially is a humanity*' [italics added] (Kneller, 1980, 112). Kneller continues referring to e.g. cultural anthropology and literature, claiming that comparative education should learn: 'from cultural anthropology, how to use the scientific method with a respect for *what is unique in particular cultures, institutions and circumstances* [italics added]; from literature, how to *empathize* [italics added] with others and do justice to the emotional impact of events and ideas' (Kneller, 1980, 113).

[46] He is specifically critical of Noah and Eckstein (1969).

[47] Consider: 'Methodology is in fact nothing more than a *reconstruction* of particular modes of inquiry utilized by working scientists. It is neither self-evident, nor singular, not static. It does not dictate what scientists in general ought to do; it reflects what particular scientists have in fact successfully done' (Barber, 1972, 425).

Barber discredits the notion of induction as a starting point for theory-building and the empirical basis of knowledge (Barber, 1972, 426-428). As a result the idea of 'objectivity' as held by positivists becomes troublesome. Instead, Barber employs the term 'intersubjectivity', which he defines in a rather restricted way[48].

Instead of aiming at an 'objective' and 'scientific' comparative education, phenomenologists have concentrated on 'interactionist' or 'interpretative' contributions. Heyman (1979), for example, underlines that comparative education should concentrate on: 'the detailed analysis of social interaction as the most obvious source of the social reality of education' (Heyman, 1979, 248). Rather than concentrating on the 'macro-analysis characterizing most of comparative education research', the attention of comparative educationists should shift to the 'analysis of the microcosmic world of everyday life' (Heyman, 1979, 245). For the study of minority schooling, this would mean that the actual educational processes in schools are studied from within, taking the perspective of actors such as teachers, pupils, parents. A phenomenological perspective would for example result in detailed analyses of social interaction patterns in bilingual classrooms.

How does phenomenology see the international study of education? According to Epstein, for Barber, 'all comparison, at least as positivistically defined and based on cross-societal generalization, is futile' (Epstein, 1988, 14). Barber, however, still calls comparison an 'invaluable research technique' (Barber, 1972, 433). Yet, when conducting comparisons it would have to be recognized that 'the bases for comparison are *brought to the data* [italics added] and are thus a function of the interests, values and intentions of the investigator' (Barber, 1972, 433). This remark reveals how phenomenologists see 'comparison': as a definitely subjective approach to the study of specific educational phenomena in various cultures, nations or historical periods, focusing on social reality as constructed by participants in social interaction, based on interpretation[49].

Summing up, in contrast to positivism, both cultural relativism and phenomenology focus on the (cultural or situation specific) particularities of educational phenomena. 'Comparison' in these paradigms is either conceived as a proper strategy for showing the diversity of education (cultural relativism) or becomes even less essential to the study of educational phenomena (phenomenology)[50]. In Sections 4.4 and 4.5, however, some approaches are discussed that aim

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[48] Barber contrasts 'objectivity' with the intersubjectivity of researchers: '(...) Objectivity turns out (..) to be nothing more than a rather misleading way of talking about intersubjectivity: a consensus reached among common observers as to the character of their perceptions. A datum, the outcome of an experiment, the tenability of a hypothesis is objective only inasmuch as it secures the subjective consent of the community of investigators for whom it is relevant. This community, like any other, is limited in its membership (*and thus represents something considerably less than even universal intersubjectivity*), parochial in its perceptions, and biased by its own conceptual-ideological preconceptions ("paradigms") of how the world is ordered' [italics added] (Barber, 1972, 428).

[49] In contrast to positivism 'subjectivity' is seen as indisputable by phenomenologists: 'Again and again (...), the crucial importance of *pre-empirical* [italics added] notions of salience is underscored. How the subject under investigation is to be delimited, what are to be understood as the subject's 'data', which concepts, factors, and units of analysis are to be used in the selection, aggregation and interpretation of relevant data *all depend on the investigator's perception* [italics added] of what is relevant, salient and valuable' (Barber, 1972, 435).

[50] Consider Epstein (1988) who is doubtful whether phenomenology in comparative education can exist at all: 'Generalization across societal boundaries defines (...) the comparative method for positivists. For cultural relativists, comparison is a process of observing the distinctiveness of individual cultures to gain an understanding of the unique attributes of each. These positions (...) both rest on a procedure that requires

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at the development of general perspectives, while maintaining something of the characteristics of particular systems of education.

4.4 The problem-solving approach

4.4.1 The contribution of Bereday

Both the work of Bereday and Holmes falls within the methodological discourse of comparative education. Their contributions can not be placed easily under the above headings of 'positivism in comparative education' and 'relativism in comparative education'. It is perhaps something of a 'hyperbole' to describe their contributions as an independent methodological standpoint, as they both often refer to positivist notions in particular. Yet, the fact that their contributions have been written with the intention to provide comparative education with its own distinct methodology and that their work frequently is still referred to, justifies their inclusion in this study. Both their methodological contributions combine in-depth study of national educational systems with 'proving' hypotheses and formulating theory. Holmes and Bereday both have regard for studying one particular case but also emphasise generalisation (cf. the use of case studies, described in: 4.5.2 en 4.5.3). Another aspect their work has in common is the focus on problem-solving. For Holmes and Bereday the comparative study of education does not have its rationale solely within itself: an important goal of comparing educational systems is to solve concrete educational policy problems. This Section concentrates on the contribution of Bereday; the next Section deals with Holmes's.

George Bereday taught comparative education at Columbia University, New York. Bereday's main methodological work is *Comparative method in education* (1964). This concise monograph is divided in four parts, of which in particular the first two, 'methods' and 'illustrations of methods', are important for the methodology proposed. Bereday calls comparative education 'the analytical survey of foreign educational systems' (Bereday, 1964, ix). He sees comparative education as a cross-disciplinary field, closely related to political science and geography, that should guide decision-making: 'In short, comparative education is a political geography of schools. Its task, with the aid of methods of other fields, is to search for lessons that can be deduced from the variations in educational practice in different societies' (Bereday, 1964, x/xi). Although Bereday makes a stand for 'knowledge for its own sake' as an aim of comparative education (Bereday, 1964, 5), he underlines the two-fold practical goal:

> 'First, to deduce from the achievements and the mistakes of school systems other than their own, lessons for their own schools (or to warn policy makers that such lessons cannot be lightheartedly sought where valid comparison is impossible); and second, to appraise educational issues from a global rather than an ethnocentric perspective, or in other words, to be aware always of other nations's points of view' (Bereday, 1964, 6).

Bereday divides the study of foreign education into two types of studies: area studies, concerned with only one country or region, and comparative studies, concerned with many countries at the same time (Bereday, 1964, 9). Within area studies, Bereday further distinguishes between the descriptive phase, the collection of purely pedagogical data, and the explanatory phase (or social

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multicultural analysis, and therefore can be said to employ some reasonable concept of 'comparison'. This is not so for phenomenological approaches, which carry relativism to a nihilistic extreme that allows only for interpretation of highly idiosyncratic interactions within severely limited contextual boundaries' (Epstein, 1988, 16).

analysis), in which social science methods are used to analyze the pedagogical data gathered (Bereday, 1964, 9). Within comparative studies Bereday also distinguishes between two phases: juxtaposition and comparison (Bereday, 1964, 9/10). So, the following overview of the field of comparative education is proposed by Bereday (Table 2). An entity can involve the educational system of for example a world region, a state, or a region within a state.

Table 2: Bereday's overview of comparative education: types of study, number of entities under study and consecutive phases of inquiry.

type of study:	number of entities:	phase of inquiry:
area study	1	description
area study	1	explanation
comparative study	more than 1	juxtaposition
comparative study	more than 1	comparison

This categorisation of the field is more than a way of representing the diverse activities of comparative researchers. Rather, Bereday proposes that in comparative education the conduct of area studies is merely a first step, after which comparison should take place. Area studies provide the researcher with the necessary descriptive and explanatory case material in order to be able to conduct a truly comparative study. So, the four types of study signify four consecutive stages which a comparative educationist should account for when executing comparative research. These stages of comparative inquiry are description, explanation (also called interpretation or social analysis), juxtaposition and comparison. In Appendix 2 a graphical presentation of these four consecutive phases can be found.

According to Bereday, the descriptive stage consists of ample bibliographical research followed by school visits (Bereday, 1964, 11–14). Bereday underlines that the comparative educationist should acquire some proficiency in the language of the country under study. He emphasises the importance of classifying the descriptive pedagogical data collected in the form of 'tables, (...) constructed according to preconceived analytical categories' (Bereday, 1964, 17).

The second stage, interpretation or social analysis, implies explaining the pedagogical data found by means of subjecting the data to scrutiny in terms of other social sciences. So, interpretation implies analysing the interrelation between (foreign) schools on the one hand and (foreign) society on the other. With regard to this link between school and society, Bereday points to the philosophical orientation of a particular society and the historical conditions under which schooling takes place:

> 'To this day no school program can be adequately explained without reference to the ultimate philosophical commitment of the society it serves, nor can educational changes be compared while ignoring the historical period in which they take place' (Bereday, 1964, 21).

The third step in a comparative inquiry is juxtaposition: the search for a unifying concept and hypothesis. By analysing the separate studies already conducted one guiding idea, in the form of a hypothesis, should be stated. The fourth step is comparison: 'a simultaneous treatment of several and all countries studied to prove the hypothesis derived from the juxtaposition' (Bereday, 1964, 22).

According to Bereday, in order to be able to manage a comparative study, it is necessary to select a certain aspect for comparison: one cannot compare whole educational systems and societies with each other (total analysis[51]) without enormous preparation (cf. Bereday, 1964, 23). Therefore, Bereday recommends the 'problem approach' in the comparative phase: 'A selection of one theme, one topic, and the examination of its persistence and variability throughout the representative educational systems. (...) The most fruitful way of studying problems is to select those that are living and relevant educational questions in the student's own country' (Bereday, 1964, 23).

The result of such a problem-oriented comparative approach is a typology of 'an educational problem, valuable in itself as a cataloguing process and potentially instructive for each country involved'. It contributes to problem-solving through exploring the diverse lessons from abroad. Bereday claims that in this way educational policy-makers are provided with a range of alternatives from which they may select an appropriate policy (cf. Bereday, 1964, 24). The problem approach of Bereday is illustrated with several examples in part two of *Comparative method in education* (1964)[52].

4.4.2 The contribution of Holmes

The methodology Bereday proposes is largely rejected by Holmes. Brian Holmes worked at the University of London, where he taught comparative and international education at the Institute of Education. He attempted to develop a distinct methodology for comparative education that would be scientific as well as effective for the solution of educational problems. This attempt resulted in a large number of publications in which Holmes sketches a possible future for comparative education (e.g. Holmes, 1958; 1965; 1977; 1981a; 1981b; 1986; 1988). His main work is *Problems in education: a comparative approach* (1965).

Holmes' analysis of Bereday's work sheds light on his own attempt to develop such a comparative methodology for comparative education. Holmes declares that Bereday's proposals are to a considerable extent merely the continuation of the earlier ideas of Kandel and Schneider (cf. Holmes, 1977, 115). As in the work of for example Kandel, the emphasis is on the historical conditions and the ideological orientations of educational systems. As such, Holmes therefore finds little new input for a scientific comparative education in Bereday's contribution. Holmes' main argument, however, against Bereday's methodological framework is the confidence in

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[51] The goal of such a total analysis is the formulation of scientific laws: 'As in all social sciences, this final stage of the discipline is concerned with the formulation of "laws" or "typologies" that permit an international understanding and a definition of the complex interrelation between schools and the people they serve. The total analysis (...) deals with the imminent [= immanent] general forces upon which all systems are built' (Bereday, 1964, 25).

[52] Bereday (1964) gives examples of a particular educational problem and national solutions to this problem, such as 'Teacher performance in three countries: England, France and Germany' (Bereday, 1964, 93-109) and 'Control of school curricula in four countries: the United States, the USSR, France and England' (Bereday, 1964, 110-128).

induction as a legitimate, objective manner of reasoning[53]. Holmes describes Bereday's focus on collection and classification of educational data as follows:

> 'Basically Bereday proposed in *Comparative Method in Education* that data should first be collected and classified. In order to do this research workers must acquire language skills and be trained to observe aspects of education at first hand. Thus equipped they could collect empirical data objectively and classify them. (...) Bereday suggested that ethnocentrism interferes more with the objective interpretation of data than with the objective collection of these' (Holmes, 1977, 116).

This emphasis on objective data-gathering and classification is rejected by Holmes, especially if the goal of comparative education would be the formulation of explanatory theories. Referring to Karl Popper (e.g. Holmes, 1986, 180) and John Dewey (e.g. Holmes, 1986, 182), Holmes fiercely attacks induction as a means towards the formulation of general laws:

> 'Implicit in the work of some comparative educationists is the view that universal panaceas can be induced from an objective study of educational "facts". Induction as a method of scientific research implies that the researcher should first observe, collect, and classify objective facts before inducing tentative causal hypotheses. Subsequently the observation of more confirming "facts" makes it possible for a hypothesis to be raised to the status of a universal, unconditionally valid law. This theory of inquiry is best outlined by George Bereday in his *Comparative method in education* (...). (Holmes, 1986, 182).

Rather than induction as a means towards causal generalization, Holmes proposes the formulation of generalizations beforehand. Such deductive statements should result from both laws and specific statements about 'initial conditions'. Holmes' emphasis on initial conditions results from Popper's plea for a hypothetico-deductive method of inquiry in the natural sciences. According to Popper, in order to explain, scientists should test deductively derived hypotheses by comparing the outcomes of events with the predictions made beforehand[54]. Holmes (1977) approvingly cites Popper who claims that: 'to give a causal explanation of a certain specific event means deducing a statement describing this event from two kind of premises: from some universal laws, and from singular or specific statement which we may call the specific initial conditions' (Popper, cited in: Holmes, 1977, 119).

Holmes stresses that these initial conditions are crucial: the national backgrounds of educational system should not be ignored. He claims that: 'induction as an epistemological theory justifies an approach to comparative education research in which general laws are stressed at the expense of *particular national circumstances*' [italics added] (Holmes, 1986, 182). To study these particular national circumstances, Holmes proposes the use of 'ideal-typical normative models', which should be derived 'from a selection of data about educational, political, religious and economic aims and theories accepted or debated by members of an organised community of individuals'[55] (Holmes, 1981a, 114). In this view, each entity under study by the comparative educationist is expected to constitute a certain normative pattern.

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53 With this argument Holmes criticizes both the ideas of Bereday and the positivist paradigm.

54 The idea that scientific theories should always be tested by empirical experiments leads to the criteria of 'falsifiability' or 'refutability' when formulating such theories.

55 According to Holmes, this implies the study of constitutions, manifestos, legislation and philosophy (cf. Holmes, 1977, 124).

In Popper's view, apart from the 'initial conditions', 'universal law' is also required in order to deduce hypotheses. According to Holmes the social sciences have not developed such laws in the same way as the natural sciences. However, according to Holmes, general (sociological) statements are constantly being made: 'Since 1945 social scientists have been far too ready to formulate sociological laws relating education to other aspects of society, and have successfully persuaded politicians to accept them without testing them' (Holmes, 1988, 129). Examples of such statements are (cf. Holmes, 1988, 129/130):

- education will raise standards of living;
- comprehensive schools will equalise opportunity and transform social class structures;
- education will promote political stability.

To Holmes, these kind of absolute statements and the 'pure' basic educational research from which they result are futile. For Holmes, 'sociological laws'[56] are important but they will always be 'hypothetical, contingent and refutable under given circumstances' (Holmes, cited in Epstein, 1988, 20). Instead of devising absolute laws, comparative educationists should concentrate on formulating tentative hypotheses. Although Holmes conceives comparative education as a 'generalizing science' (Holmes, 1986, 199), he focuses on solving educational policy problems.

For Holmes, the hypotheses of comparative educationists are in fact policy advices will specific educational innovations succeed in a particular context? To answer this question is difficult, as it entails the issue of to what extent human behaviour is predictable[57]. Both 'sociological laws' (statements about relationships between educational institutions or between education and other societal domains) and 'normative models' (national circumstances) are required. However, according to Holmes, to respond to this type of educational policy issue is the main task of comparative education: 'comparative educationists may well choose to concentrate on some likely (...) consequences of policy innovation and to suggest ways in which under given circumstances policy may be successfully implemented' (Holmes, 1977, 128/129)[58].

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[56] The type of 'laws' Holmes envisages is different than the typical invariant positivist type. Holmes remarks: 'Sociological laws can be established relating the operation of one institution with another. These relationships may be between either different educational institutions or an educational institution and a socioeconomic or political institution. Consequently, taxonomies of societal institutions and for educational institutions are needed in order to classify collected data. Tasks for the comparative educationist are to describe relevant institutions and establish sociological laws that relate them together' (Holmes, 1986, 198).

[57] Holmes states: 'The question is: Can we predict all the consequences of human action with certainty before they occur? Certainly not. (...) On the other hand, I do believe that some of the consequences of human activity can with a measure of certainty be anticipated provided the specific conditions under which the predictions are made are adequately taken into account' (Holmes, 1988, 124/125).

[58] A contribution of Turner (1987) suggests that such a comparative study is indeed possible. He aims at: 'the development of a prototype sociological law which not only shows how predictions can be made in a comparative context, but also shows how conditions in different countries are to be incorporated' (Turner, 1987, 39). His example is a game theory model, with reference to four groups of people, in different economic circumstances.

4.5 The case study approach[59]

4.5.1 The case study method as the ethnography of schooling

The use of case studies has not received much attention in methodological literature. In general, it has been connoted with the ethnographic activities of cultural anthropologists. To define 'case study research' as a specific type of social science inquiry is of recent date. This Section draws on an important contribution to the theory of case study research, to wit Yin's (1989; 1993)[60]. Yin has developed a view on the use of case studies that is highly relevant to those studying minority schooling abroad.

It is with great ease that comparative educationists have used the term 'case study' or 'case'. Opper (1983), for example, calls her study of Swedish educational policy a 'case of assimilation and integration', whereas Halls (1983) refers to his analysis of the Belgian educational system as 'a case study in educational regionalism'[61]. The term 'case study' is widely used by comparative educationists; for them it refers to the description of a foreign educational system, policy or phenomenon.

In contrast to the ease with which comparative educationists have employed the term 'case' or 'case study', and the common practice of conducting descriptive studies of a singular educational system, stands the minor attention that has been given to case study methodology. 'Case study methodology' has been equated with how to conduct ethnographic studies. Masemann (1986), for example, proposes ethnographic studies, which she defines as: 'studies which use a basically anthropological, qualitative, participant-observer methodology'. In general, studies of this type have been written from a cultural relativist or phenomenological perspective (cf. 4.3). The 'case study method', in this definition, refers to the ethnography of schooling[62].

So, in comparative education the 'case study method' has usually been connoted with the 'ethnography of schooling' (cf. Spindler, 1982): the study of particular educational phenomena mainly through participant observation. The aim of such ethnographic inquiry is to describe the essential features of education, as experienced by the actors involved. Instead of 'scientific' knowledge, the conduct of an ethnographic case study produces insight or 'Verstehen'[63].

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[59] An elaborated version of this section was presented as a discussion paper at the 16th conference of the Comparative Education Society in Europe, June 1994, Copenhagen, under the following title: 'Case studies in comparative education: beyond the particular?' (see: Renkema, 1994a).

[60] Yin has proposed the use of case studies in the social sciences in: R.K. Yin (1984) *Case study research: design and methods*. Beverly Hills/London/New Delhi: SAGE, of which a second and revised edition was published in 1989. He has elaborated his views in: R.K. Yin (1993) *Applications of case study research*. Newbury Park/London/New Delhi: SAGE.

[61] Other examples are Churchill (1986) and Holmes and McLean (1989), who refer to 'case studies' included in their comparative analyses of respectively the position of minorities and curriculum transfer.

[62] Bromley (1986) observes: 'In education (...) the case-study method has not been clearly defined. It has been bracketed, somewhat vaguely, with participant observation, qualitative studies, ethnography, and field studies' (Bromley, 1986, 22).

[63] Masemann (1986) has focused on the conduct of ethnographic studies that are embedded in critical theory. She questions ethnographic research that is not driven by theoretical considerations and states that 'critical ethnography' refers to studies that: 'rely for their theoretical formulation on a body of theory deriving from critical sociology and philosophy' (Masemann, 1986, 11).

Stenhouse (1979) and Crossley and Vulliamy (1984) have dealt with this use of case studies in comparative education. Stenhouse (1979) underlines that:

> 'Comparative education is not (...) a science seeking general laws; nor is it a discipline of knowledge either in the sense that it provides a structure to support the growth of mind, or in the sense that it has distinctive conventions by which its truths are tested. (...) General principles are (...) not the characteristic products of the study, but rather means towards the *illumination of the particular* [italics added] (Stenhouse, 1979, 5).

Clearly, for Stenhouse the conduct of case studies does not lead to the formulation of general principles. Rather, the latter function as 'the background which serves to throw the individual into clear relief' (Stenhouse, 1979, 5). Stenhouse's preferred strategy in conducting case studies is extensive observation and description of contemporary, real-life educational processes (Stenhouse, 1979, 6-9)[64]. He suggests that comparative educationists should conduct case studies based on ethnographic field work, employing participant observation and interviews (Stenhouse, 1979, 9-10). The knowledge resulting from case study research, in this ethnographic definition, is insight in the particular, not general law.

Crossley and Vulliamy (1984) agree with Stenhouse that case study research should have a dominant position in comparative education (Crossley and Vulliamy, 1984, 193). They distinguish between three traditions of case study research in education: the anthropological tradition, the sociological tradition and the use of case studies in curriculum and programme evaluation (Crossley and Vulliamy, 1984, 193). The first two traditions share a focus on ethnographic field work, in particular classroom interaction (Delamont and Atkinson, 1980)[65], whereas the third is concerned with studying the process of curriculum innovation rather then merely assessing outputs[66]. All three traditions aim at description of educational reality at the school level.

Crossley and Vulliamy argue that (positivist) comparative educationists have 'ambivalent attitudes towards descriptive school level research' (Crossley and Vulliamy, 1984, 195). These are: 'fostered by academic disdain for the "travellers' tales" era, and by the lowly status of area studies which are widely regarded as preliminary activities for serious comparativists' (Crossley and Vulliamy, 1984, 195). In contrast to this ambivalence, however, Crossley and Vulliamy stress that: 'the case study research paradigm holds considerable potential for comparative education' (Crossley and Vulliamy, 1984, 195). They specifically see the case study research paradigm as useful for bridging the gap between policy and practice, and between macro-level and micro-level research (Crossley and Vulliamy, 1984, 197-201). Their attention nevertheless

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[64] Consider: (...) Comparative education has paid too little attention to observation and description, preferring to emphasize such abstractions as statistics and measurements on the one hand and school 'systems' on the other' (Stenhouse, 1979, 6). Instead, Stenhouse proposes that comparative educationists should develop: 'a better grounded representation of day-to-day educational reality resting on the careful study of particular cases' (Stenhouse, 1979, 10).

[65] The anthropological tradition is predominantly North American (e.g. Spindler, 1982), while the sociological tradition is British in origin, and embedded in what has commonly been called the 'new sociology of education'.

[66] Curriculum and programme evaluation has traditionally been informed by an emphasis on measurement of results, description of treatments and judgement by the evaluator (cf. Guba and Lincoln, 1989, 21-31). Recent contributions to evaluation theory propose the use of case studies from a relativist paradigm (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). For a critical view on the use of case study methods in curriculum evaluation, see Walker (1983).

lies mainly on the micro-level[67]; with respect to likelihood that results of case study research can be used for the formation of general statements they state (with reference to their own case studies):

> '(...) it should be recognized that given the epistemological foundations of case study, although findings are used to challenge certain assumptions currently held by many curriculum change theorists, *no attempt is made to extrapolate general laws or universally applicable recommendations in a positivistic sense'* [italics added] (Crossley and Vulliamy, 1984, 201).

4.5.2 The case study method as a distinct research strategy

Unlike Stenhouse (1979) and Crossley and Vulliamy (1984), Yin (1989; 1993) considers it possible to employ case studies in formulating general principles and developing comprehensive theories. In his definition the 'case study method'[68] is not equated with ethnographic inquiry, but perceived as a distinct strategy in the social sciences.

The contribution of Yin (1989; 1993) to case study methodology is not specifically aimed at comparative educationists, as Yin addresses the social sciences at large. Until now, only few studies in the field of comparative and international education refer to Yin's framework of case study research[69]. According to Yin (1989), the case study method has often been associated with (and confused with) qualitative methods in general and ethnography and participant observation in particular (Yin, 1989, 11). The case study method has little status in social science research[70]. According to Yin, though, it deserves a distinct place within social science research, as it is a 'rigorous method of research' (Yin, 1989, 11). He admits that it is 'but one of several ways of doing social science research' (Yin, 1989, 13). As a distinct research strategy, and not to be confused with ethnography, it is highly relevant when studying contemporary social phenomena. Of the diverse strategies of conducting research: 'case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator

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[67] Epstein (1988) has described Crossley and Vulliamy's contribution as an attempt at a synthesis of positivism and cultural relativism/phenomenology (Epstein, 1988, 17/18). He argues that their view on the use of case studies as a bridge between macro-analysis and micro-analysis is not accurate and maintains that case studies can be used either in a positivist framework or in a relativist framework (Epstein, 1988, 18). Epstein positions their contribution in the former framework, whereas in the present study it is seen as embedded within the latter, since Crossley and Vulliamy argue that the epistemological foundations of case study research are not compatible with positivism. Thus, their view on the use of case studies is classified under the ethnographic definition.

[68] Throughout this section both the term 'case study method' and 'case study research' are used. They refer to the study of one 'case': a contemporary, naturally occurring phenomenon in its wider context. More than one case, however, may also be studied by means of the case study method.

[69] Two studies that refer to Yin (1984/1989) as main methodological source are: Reid and Reich (1992) and Renkema (1993). Both use the case study method, in the definition of Yin, in a context of educational evaluation. For the methodological considerations of the former, refer to Jungmann and the ECCE group (1992).

[70] Consider the way Yin describes the typical reaction to the conduct of case study research: 'The case study has long been stereotyped as a weak sibling among social science methods. Investigators who do case studies are regarded as having deviated from their academic disciplines; their investigations, as having insufficient precision (that is, quantification), objectivity, and rigor' (Yin, 1989, 10).

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has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context' (Yin, 1989, 13).

According to Yin, the case study method can be used for all social science research purposes: description, exploration and explanation (Yin, 1989, 15-16). He explicitly distinguishes the case study method from qualitative research:

> 'The essence of qualitative research consists of two conditions: (a) the use of close-up, detailed observation of the natural world by the investigator, and (b) the attempt to avoid prior commitment to any theoretical model. (...) However, this type of research does not always produce case studies (...), nor are case studies always limited to these two conditions. Instead, case studies can be based (...) entirely on quantitative evidence; in addition, case studies need not always include direct, detailed observations as a source of evidence' (Yin, 1989, 25).

So, according to Yin, the case study method is a research strategy that is to be separated from qualitative research in a broad sense[71]. With regard to the design of case studies, Yin states that it is essential to relate the design to theoretical statements, as: 'theory development prior to the collection of any case study data is an essential step in doing case studies' (Yin, 1989, 36). Such theoretical statements do not have to have the status nor the formality of 'grand theories'; to formulate statements or merely 'embryonic' ideas beforehand, however, is essential, because these ideas: 'will increasingly cover the questions, propositions, units of analysis, logic connecting data to propositions, and criteria for interpreting the findings - that is, the five components of the needed research design (Yin, 1989, 36)'

Yin discerns four major case study designs (Yin, 1989, 46). Two important criteria are used: (1) the question of whether only one case is included in the design or more than one; and (2) the question of whether only one unit of analysis is used or more than one. These criteria result in a matrix of four designs (Table 3):

Table 3: Four major case study designs (Source: Yin, 1989, 46)

	Single-case designs	Multiple-case designs
Holistic (single unit of analysis)	TYPE 1	TYPE 3
Embedded (multiple units of analysis)	TYPE 2	TYPE 4

For the comparative study of minority language education, the difference between a single-case design and multiple-case design is rather obvious: a single-case design for example includes one European region, whereas in a multiple-case design several regions are studied. The difference between holistic studies and embedded studies is more difficult. A holistic study for example would study several types of minority language curriculum, e.g. monolingual versus bilingual curricula. This curriculum division is the unit of analysis. The second, an embedded study,

[71] Yin claims that five essential research strategies can be distinguished in the social sciences: survey, experiment, archival analysis, historical study and case study. The difference between quantitative and qualitative methods does not separate these strategies: all five can rely on either quantitative or qualitative methods, or a combination of these. Moreover, these five strategies are not mutually exclusive (cf. Yin, 1989, 16-25).

would for example also include, within these two types of curriculum, teachers' behaviour or instructional methods in schools.

4.5.3 The problem of generalizability

The main drawback of case study research, according to positivists, has been the difficulty of generalizing from single cases to a larger population. The priority of the social sciences is not the description and analysis of particular events, but should aim at the explanation of social phenomena in general.

The problem of generalizability has received ample attention in methodological debates in the social sciences. Typically, the term 'generalizability' refers to the issue of whether results found in a specific study are valid in other contexts as well. Kerlinger (1981), for example, defines the term as a question: 'Can we generalize the results of a study to other subjects, other groups, and other conditions?' (Kerlinger, 1981, 324).

This definition of generalizability has severe consequences for the conduct of scientific research: the research design should possess 'external validity'[72]. As such, the notion of generalizability of research results has in particular been judged as essential by those active in basic research, as they: 'are interested in formulating and testing theoretical constructs and propositions that ideally *generalize across time and space* [italics added]' (Patton, 1990, 156).

For the social and behavioural sciences, this implies that they 'are searching for fundamental patterns of (...) society and human beings' (Patton, 1990, 156). Although many applied researchers have limited their scope somewhat, the idea of generalizability has also informed their work. For researchers studying contemporary social phenomena this usually has meant that they draw a sample from a larger population (using specific techniques in order to obtain a representative sample), followed by testing hypotheses that, if they are accepted, can be generalized to the population. In comparative education, the IEA studies are a classical example of this approach (see: 4.2). This approach to the study of contemporary phenomena leads to the formulation of general principles.

How to develop such general terms from single cases? Yin (1989; 1993) thinks it is feasible to study cases in order to contribute to theory development. With regard to generalizability of results he distinguishes between analytic generalization on the one hand and statistical generalization on the other. While the former is typical for case study research[73], the latter is the common definition of generalization, as described above:

> 'Case studies (...) are generalizable to theoretical prepositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study (...) does not represent a "sample", and the investigator's goal is to expand and generalize theories (*analytic generalization* [italics added]) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)' (Yin, 1989, 21).

This concept of generalization is fundamentally different from the classic concept in the social sciences (as e.g. Kerlinger's, 1981). Yin underlines this difference as follows:

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[72] Kerlinger (1981) equates external validity with generalizability and even with representativeness: 'A difficult criterion to satisfy, *external validity* means *representativeness* or *generalizability*' [italics in original] (Kerlinger, 1981, 325).

[73] The term is also used in experimental settings (Yin, 1989, 21).

> 'The external validity problem has been a major barrier in doing case studies. Critics typically state that single cases offer a poor basis for generalizing. However, such critics are implicitly contrasting the situation to survey research, where a "sample" (if selected correctly) readily generalizes to a larger universe. *This analogy to samples and universes is incorrect when dealing with case studies* [italics in original]. This is because survey research relies on statistical generalization, whereas case studies (...) rely on analytical generalization' (Yin, 1989, 43).

Analytic generalization is thus another problem than the difficulty researchers face when generalizing from a sample to a population or universe[74]. Generalizing to theory, according to Yin, relies on replication logic, which involves the use of multiple cases, as in experimental settings, when several experiments strengthen the theory that is being developed (cf. Yin, 1989, 53). The number of cases does not depend on their 'representativeness', but on the theoretical considerations for selecting them. This concept can also be found in the contrast between 'probability sampling' and 'purposeful sampling' (Patton, 1990):

> 'The logic and power of probability sampling depends on selecting a truly random and statistically representative sample that will permit confident generalization from the sample to a larger population (...). The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich cases* [italics in original] for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term *purposeful* [italics in original] sampling' (Patton, 1990, 169).

Yin has described, with adequate examples, how to select cases and how to relate the results of case study research to theory (cf. Yin, 1993, 3-28). In all instances, the capacity of the researcher to combine the conduct of case studies with adequate theoretical analysis is of major importance. Or, as Bromley (1986) states: 'Generalization from the single case is based on the validity of the analysis, not on some prior notion about the representativeness of the case' (Bromley, 1986, 288).

How can the work of Yin be employed in comparative education research? Much of the work done in comparative education actually is the study of a single foreign educational system. Although it might be argued that this comparative work is comparative 'case study research'[75], it has not been informed by a well-founded methodological view on the use of cases. The advantage of comparative education is that the nature of much research requires both in-depth analysis of single cases and the comparison of several cases. In the terminology of Yin (1989; 1993) this signifies the use of single-case designs and multiple-case designs[76].

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[74] A similar point is made by Bromley (1986): 'The main point (...) is that the case laws (conceptual frameworks) arrived at are in no way dependent upon prior considerations regarding representative sampling from a demographically defined population. That is a different approach to a different problem' (Bromley, 1986, 3).

[75] With regard to comparative research, it is possible to state that studying a single case (in comparative education: one foreign educational system or phenomenon) in fact means the comparative study of two cases: the own system or culture is compared with the foreign (cf. Campbell, 1975, 188). This is in line with the idea of 'implicit comparison' held by some comparative educationists (cf. Spolton, 1968; Halls, 1990a, 27). Campbell (1975), however, points to an important pitfall of this idea: 'The single case study (...) is in reality a comparison of two cases: the original culture and the foreign culture. But this is *a very asymmetrical comparison* [italics added] (...)' (Campbell, 1975, 188).

[76] The multiple-case design has also been called the comparable-cases strategy (Lijphart, 1975) or controlled comparison (cf. van Hoesel, 1985, 250).

Chapter 5: Multiculturalism, identity and curriculum control[77]

5.1 The Mercator-Education studies: position, results and the need for explanation

5.1.1 Introduction: positioning the Mercator-Education studies within comparative education

This chapter abandons methodological considerations. It deals with the object of Mercator-Education rather than its methods. However, in order to be able to arrive at 'understanding the position of lesser used languages in European educational systems', more is needed than methodological advancement. Therefore, this chapter focuses on how comparative education has dealt with cultural pluralism and the position of minority groups. First, the place of the Mercator-Education studies within the field of comparative education and their concrete results are briefly described. In comparative education, the national system of education has commonly been viewed as the principal unit of comparison. This approach draws on the practice of early comparativists such as Kandel, Schneider and Hans who focused on the nation-state by employing concepts such as 'national character'. However, over the years the notion that comparative educationists should compare national systems of education has eroded (Kelly and Altbach, 1986). Instead, comparative educationists have increasingly dealt with the place of the educational system under study within the larger world system. This has led to the identification of 'world regions' in the international study of education (Arnove, 1980; Halls, 1990a). The unit of comparison has, to some extent, shifted away from the national level to that of the supra-national level of world regions. At the same time, though, a shift to small states (cf. Alapuro, 1985) and regions within states can be distinguished (Edwards, Jütte and Renkema, 1991). It is within this shift toward the analysis of regions within contemporary states that the Mercator-Education studies can be situated. This chapter presents some results of these studies (5.1) and provides an overview of educationists' explanatory analyses of aspects such as multiculturalism, ethnic identity and curriculum control (5.2 and 5.3). These are considered as components for a theory of the position of minority languages in European languages.

5.1.2 Results of Mercator-Education studies

As can be read from the diagram in Section 1.2 Mercator-Education's approach involves the use of expert-correspondents who are asked to respond to a predefined, standardized item list. Afterwards Mercator-Education uses these responses for comparison, resulting in the establishment of typologies or classifications of educational provisions in European regions.

For primary education (the EMU project) a difference was made between the extent and the content of minority language education. 'Extent' refers to factual, quantitative aspects of educational provisions in the minority language, such as the amount of time spent on minority language education, the number of pupils involved, the number of schools involved, the number of hours for which the minority language is the medium of instruction, the amount of learning materials available, etc. (cf. Gorter, 1991, 60). The second term, 'content', points to aspects related to the actual curricular activities taking place in schools, such as the place of the minority language in the curriculum as subject or as medium of instruction, the language skills taught,

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[77] This chapter was presented as a paper at the 16th CESE Conference, Copenhagen, June 1994, under the following title: 'Regional identities in Europe: the position of lesser used languages in the educational systems of the European Union'. It was published in: TERTIUM COMPARATIONIS, Journal für Internationale Bildungsforschung, (1995) 1, p. 42-62 (see: Renkema, 1995).

the methods used, the subjects for which the minority language is used, the development and production of learning materials, etc. (cf. Gorter, 1991, 60).

Most of these aspects were first classified separately, through comparative analysis, according to a strength–weakness dimension. Also, a final classification of the relative position of lesser used languages in primary education was constructed, summarizing the 'scores' on the separate aspects[78]. This classification is presented in Appendix 3[79].

An important conclusion of the EMU project was that there is a severe lack of education in and about lesser used languages. This type of education, for the greatest part, merely exists in the margins of the European educational systems. Not in all regions have language minorities been successful in organizing minority language education within the public education system, nor have they been able to establish private educational provisions. As a consequence, even in regions classified in the strongest group, not all pupils are able to receive their primary education (partly) through the lesser used language. Gorter (1991) observes that only in a few cases are there developments towards a full–fledged educational system existing side by side with the traditional system or (partly) replacing the majority language dominated system (cf. Gorter, 1991, 62). These cases, in which during the last decennia an educational transition of considerable extent has been taking place, include the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (Spain), Catalonia (Spain), Ireland and the German–speaking community of South Tyrol (Italy) (cf. Sikma and Gorter, 1991, 109–110). Several constraints for the further development of minority language education in the regions concerned were distinguished in the EMU project (cf. Gorter, 1991, 62–63):

- Insufficient legal provisions;
- Lack of competent teachers;
- Lack of adequate instructional material;
- Attitudes of teachers and parents involved.

These constraints are dealt with, besides a range of other questions, in the other projects of Mercator–Education. In the EMOL project particularly the training of teachers for minority language education at primary and secondary education level is addressed (Dekkers, 1995). The quality of teacher training is a factor whose influence has been underestimated. The ability of the teacher to speak the minority language fluently as well as his competence in directing the language development of students are major goals in teacher training for minority language education. In the language communities various options exist for improving teacher performance in this area, ranging from the inclusion of the minority language in the initial teacher preparation

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[78] This 'summing up' in order to present the position of the languages in primary education in a clear, albeit reduced, manner is not without problems. Gorter (1991) states the following: 'We have tried to present a final classification of the languages that indicates their relative position in primary education *vis à vis* each other. This table (...) has to be interpreted with great care. (..) It is important to know that this final classification was not arrived at merely by adding up the previous classifications we made of the various sub–aspects. First, we did not have complete data for all aspects, and secondly such a simple sum would mean that the various aspects that could be classified would be weighted in the same way' (Gorter, 1991, 61).

[79] Apart from the extent and content of minority language education, its structure was taken into account for estimating the relative position. 'Structure' refers to the whole of official provisions for minority language education: viz. legal provisions, financial provisions, teacher–training provisions and provisions for pedagogical advice. These provisions are considered 'to guarantee, support, and foster the minority language either as subject or as medium of instruction' (Sikma and Gorter, 1988, 64).

to making in-service training available for teachers already actively involved in minority language education. One of the conclusions of the EMOL project is that the position of lesser used languages is considerably stronger within institutes of teacher training for primary education than it is in those for secondary education[80]. This difference has been considered in establishing the classification of the relative position of lesser used languages in European teacher education that is presented in Appendix 4.

The issue of the provision of instructional material is the focus of the LEMA project (Tjeerdsma and Sikma, 1994). The development of attractive and cheap learning materials appears to be a bottleneck in the provision of effective language instruction. Development and diffusion mostly concern a small-scale activities. Unique language minorities and those which are minorities in more than one state attempt to meet their needs by developing the learning material in their own language community (Tjeerdsma and Sikma, 1994). Those minorities that speak a language spoken by a majority in another state in general rely on the import of learning materials produced over there. As in the EMU project, the relationship between the actual position of a minority language in the educational system on the one hand and formal responsibility with regard to minority language education on the other is underlined[81]. In the PREP project the issues of responsibility and parental attitudes are distinguished as essential in the establishment of pre-primary education in the lesser used language (van der Goot, Renkema and Stuijt, 1994). Where no public system of pre-primary education in the lesser used language exist, private initiatives by parents and teachers have successfully been established. The concern of parents in this area is with the transfer of children from the family, the sphere of primary socialisation, to playgroups and nursery schools, the earliest secondary socialisation.

5.1.3 Towards an explanation?

The establishment of classifications, such as those presented in Appendices 3 and 4, implies a precise description of the current relative position of lesser used languages in educational systems, on a national and international scale. Yet, to go beyond a mere description of the position of lesser used languages in European educational systems would mean that an explanation of this position is offered. Such an explanation would clarify why the position of a minority language is strong or weak in a system of education. The Mercator-Education studies show that differences between minority language regions are considerable. The Mercator-Education studies have listed a number of factors that influence the relative position of minority languages in educational systems, such as:

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[80] Four factors have been distinguished that influence this difference between the training of teachers for both levels of education: 1. the position of minority language education at the level of education concerned; 2. the degree to which specific policy arrangements have been made and governmental measures have been taken regarding the place of the lesser used language in the training of teachers; 3. the divergent structures of teacher training for both levels; 4. the degree of autonomy of teacher training institutes (cf. Dekkers, 1995, chapter 8.2).

[81] Consider: 'There is a connection between the strength of a minority language in the education system and the involvement of the government with the production of learning materials: in the weakest minority languages private organizations (and people) are responsible for production; in the stronger language communities the government provides (directly or indirectly) for the need of new material; in the very strong minority language communities the role of the government declines in favor of professional and commercial organizations' (Tjeerdsma and Sikma, 1994, 50).

- legal protection: does a minority language receive any formal protection by state and regional authorities, through which its position in the educational system is safeguarded?
- responsibility and policy issues: do public authorities take responsibility for the inclusion of minority language instruction in the educational system or, if not, do they support the initiatives of private bodies aiming at the establishment of educational provisions in this area?
- attitudes of actors involved: do parents and teachers have positive attitudes toward the inclusion of the lesser used language in the school curriculum, also if this implies considerable financial investment and extra duties for educationists and teachers?

Notwithstanding the importance of identifying such factors, at this moment no comprehensive explanatory theory of the position of lesser used languages in European educational systems exists. The following Section is intended to trace to what extent comparative educationists and sociologists have engaged themselves with the problem of the position of minorities in educational systems and what explanatory analyses have been proposed in this matter.

5.2 Multiculturalism and multilingualism

5.2.1 The diversity of culture

Comparative education has dealt extensively with the role of education in a culturally and ethnically diverse society. In 1976 Paulston called the relationship between ethnicity and educational change a priority for comparative education (Paulston, 1976a). His view is echoed by Grant, who urges comparative educationists to study the response of educational systems to cultural pluralism (Grant, 1977). In 1977 and 1983 the conferences of the CESE[82] were dedicated to the overarching theme of how cultural diversity influences educational development[83]. Holmes (1985) identifies two categories of minorities:

> 'Small and large groups of people, *recently arrived or long resident* [italics added], speaking different languages and with different ethnic backgrounds, [who] live together in one country under the same national law or reside in close proximity one to another in large cities or conurbations' (Holmes, 1985, 693).

The educational position of both categories of linguistically and culturally distinct groups[84], recent immigrant minorities and long resident minorities, has been studied by comparative educationists. However, the bulk of educational studies in this area have focused on the first category. Examples of such studies in comparative education include: Steedman (1979), McLean (1983), Opper (1983), and Smolicz (1990). Theoretically, much of the comparative research

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[82] CESE is the abbreviation for the Comparative Education Society in Europe.

[83] The proceedings of these conferences were published under the following titles: Holmes, B. (ed.) (1980) *Diversity and unity in education*. London: Allen & Unwin, and: Mitter, W. and J. Swift (eds.) (1985) *Education and the diversity of cultures: the contribution of comparative education*. Köln/Wien: Böhlau.

[84] Language and culture are considered as separate categories: 'Among cultural institutions language is fundamental but (...) should not be regarded as synonymous with culture. Language (...) serves to identify different cultural groups' (Holmes, 1985, 701).

conducted on these immigrant minorities has been informed by the work of e.g. Schermerhorn[85] and Ogbu[86]. Mobin Shorish and Wirt (1993) underline that most of this comparative research on education and ethnicity has theoretically been based on notions such as 'power' and 'control' (Mobin Shorish and Wirt, 1993, 2–3).

The second category of ethnic minorities, those who have been 'long resident' in contemporary societies, are also named indigenous minorities (Welch, 1988). Studies in comparative education that address the educational position of these minorities include Hawkins' study of national minorities in China (1978), Kravetz' study of minorities in the former USSR (1980), Barrington's comparison of Maori education in New Zealand with the education of Native Americans in the USA (1981), the study of Welch (1988) on the schooling of the Aboriginal minorities in Australia, and the work of Abu Saad (1991), who studied the Bedouin Arabs in Israel.

Mercator–Education studies the educational position of European regional minorities. In comparative education the position of these indigenous minorities was studied by e.g. Tusquets and Benavent (1978), McNair (1980), Brinley Jones (1983), García Garrido (1983), Grant (1981, 1983, 1988), Corner (1988), Morgan (1988), Petherbridge–Hernandez (1990a), Grant and Docherty (1992). The Saami have been studied by Paulston (1976b) and were included by Wirt (1979) in his comparative analysis of ethnic minorities. It can be concluded that of the over 40 lesser used language communities in Western Europe, especially the Basques, Catalans, Welshmen, Saami and the Gaelic community of Scotland have been the object of study of comparative educationists. In general, these studies have been descriptive, and the development of theory has been very limited. The work of Paulston[87] has been used by Petherbridge–Hernandez to analyze educational transformations in Catalonia (Petherbridge–Hernandez, 1990a, 1990b; Petherbridge–Hernandez and Raby, 1993). More often, however, apart from a factual description of their characteristics, merely a typology of minorities is proposed (e.g. Corner, 1988; Grant, 1988).

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[85] Schermerhorn's main work has been within the American tradition of race relations research. His most influential publication is *Comparative ethnic relations: a framework for theory and research* (New York: Random House, 1970), in which he distinguishes between dominant and subordinate ethnic groups in society. For Schermerhorn a subordinate minority is a group which is relatively small of size and that is unable to exert power. Schermerhorn defines 'ethnicity' as: 'a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of peoplehood' (Schermerhorn, 1970, 6).

[86] Ogbu also relates minority status to power relations between groups. He distinguishes several types of (ethnic) minorities: autonomous minorities, caste–like minorities and immigrant minorities. Ogbu has elaborated his views on the position of minorities and the function of the educational system in e.g.: Ogbu, J.U. (1978) *Minority education and caste: the American system in cross–cultural perspective*. New York: Academic Press, and: Ogbu, J.U. (1983) Minority status and schooling in plural societies, *Comparative Education Review*, 27 (2), 168–190.

[87] Paulston (1980a, 1980b), has described non–formal education as a liberating instrument, used by ethnic minority movements.

5.2.2 *The role of language*

Although only very rarely comparative education theoretically has been connected with sociolinguistics[88], a lot of studies have included the 'language factor' (Taylor, 1992) in the analysis of the educational position of ethnic minorities. For the first group, immigrant minorities, concern for the language of their children has led to the establishment of (transitional) bilingual education provisions for them (e.g. in Germany: McLaughlin and Graf, 1985). In their case, speaking a language other than that of the dominant majority has primarily been seen as an obstacle for attaining scholastic achievement similar to that attained by majority children (cf. Troyna, 1988). However, for the lesser used language communities, language nowadays is no longer viewed as a possible hindrance for the school careers of children as much as it is seen as the main component of minority identity[89]. Heyman (1978) remarks that often language, more than any other minority group characteristic, is a 'rallying point for minority *identity* [italics added] concerns, partly because of its identification with the many cultural aspects of group identity and partly because of its relationship with the identity of the self' (Heyman, 1978, 3). Edwards (1988) affirms that language has been ascribed a central role in maintaining and strengthening ethnic identity (Edwards, 1988, 205).

Edwards points to the role language had in the development of national identities in Romantic nineteenth century Europe (Edwards, 1988, 205). Fishman (1972) refers to the instrumental function of language in the development of nation-states in Europe as well as in developing nations (Fishman, 1972, 29-37). Yet, it is not only nation-states which have used language to form their (national) identity; ethnic minorities in contemporary states do the same (cf. Renkema, 1994b). This relation between minority language and ethnic identity has been observed by e.g. Brinley Jones (1983)[90] and Woolard (1990), who underlines that: 'language choice does not simply follow from ethnic identity, but may actually constitute it' (Woolard, 1990, 63). Regional minorities in Western Europe undoubtedly emphasize their language as the main group characteristic designating ethnic identity. The minority language is the principal ethnic group symbol (cf. Edwards, 1988)[91]. 'Language' can therefore be seen as a central matter in the revival of regional identities in Europe.

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[88] An attempt to relate these two fields of study theoretically was undertaken by Moore (Moore, J. (1972) Comparative education and sociolinguistics. *Comparative Education*, 8 (2), 57-61). She proposed comparative studies in the area of language varieties in educational systems. Studies of this kind are: Shafer, R.E. and S.M. Schafer (1975) Teacher attitudes towards children's language in West Germany and England, *Comparative Education*, 11 (1), 43-61, and: Marks, C.T. (1976) Policy and attitudes towards the teaching of standard dialect: Great Britain, France, West Germany. *Comparative Education*, 12 (3), 199-218.

[89] Although also immigrant minorities are increasingly showing concern for the preservation of their own identity, their first interest has in general been integration into the majority, in particular with regard to the socio-economic domain.

[90] He calls the Welsh language 'perhaps the most distinctive feature of Welsh identity' (Brinley Jones, 1983, 157).

[91] The link between language and ethnic identity is close. For a detailed analysis of this link, refer to Edwards (1985, 1988) and in particular Clément and Noels (1992), who observe that 'language and ethnicity are inextricably linked because language plays important symbolic and instrumental functions in (...) ethnic collectives' (Clément and Noels, 1992, 204).

5.3 European integration and regional identities

In Europe, processes of nation-building, centralisation and rapid transition from traditional societies into modern societies have led to the marginalisation of many minority language groups. The core of modern society has become the urban settlement, being the centre of government and economic life. Regions turn into the periphery of the centre. For this process the concept of 'internal colonization' has been used (cf. Evans, 1991; Edwards, 1985, 73-74; and especially Hechter, 1975). Although this concept has most commonly been used to describe the economic dependence of peripherical regions on the centre of a nation-state, it also has a cultural dimension, as Bahrenberg (1993) remarks:

> 'Regarding culture, internal colonization means homogenization of originally divergent "regional" cultures and the gradual establishment of an "advanced culture" (...) by means of educational systems and national cultural institutions. An important element in this process is a uniform literary language, which often develops from the administrative language of the national centre. Deviating languages become dialects. The cultural traditions which are not in accordance with the advanced culture are being regarded as folklore' (Bahrenberg, 1993, 67).

As a consequence the languages and cultures of mostly rural or maritime minorities have been driven to the periphery of modern society. Examples of these are the Gaelic and Saami communities. Other European indigenous minorities, or better their territories, have been transferred from one state to another as a consequence of international conflicts and agreements, as a result of which people have ended up in the margins of a culture that is not their own. In all these cases the culture and language of the dominant majority differ from the minority. For indigenous minorities, the post-war construction of a unified Europe has meant the integration into an even larger political, economic and cultural entity. These processes however are counterbalanced by the revival of regional identities[92]. Halls (1983) underlines this apparent contradiction between global integration and local diversity:

> 'It is nevertheless a paradox that in an era when nations combine in international organisations as never before, the pull for regionalism has never been stronger. (...) Where culture is becoming homogenised, an instinctive necessity is felt to preserve local particularisms' (Halls, 1983, 169-170)

The revival of regional identities has been studied by e.g. MacDonald (1993) and Hoekveld (1993). As such, the revival of ethnic identities can be seen as a response to processes of (inter)national integration and homogenization[93] (cf. Halls, 1983). It entails the conscious reconstruction of ethnic identities by contemporary regional groups. Such a revival 'can only succeed when the authorities also create symbolic communities' (Hoekveld, 1993, 35). Elements used in this revival include a common past, language and literature (cf. McDonald, 1993; Hoekveld, 1993). For regional minorities, the use of the minority language in education is a

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92 'Regional identity' is a concept that lacks a clear definition. Concerning the concept of regional identity Hoekveld (1993) states that: 'it is an inexact, ambiguous, amorphous, multi-interpreted term' (Hoekveld, 1993, 15). He nevertheless employs the term, which he defines as: 'a representation of some selected and integrated properties of the region as expressed by its inhabitants or by outsiders for whom this selection has a particular meaning and/or interest, while the integration of properties is either real or imagined' (Hoekveld, 1993, 15-16). One of this selected properties may be the language used by inhabitants.

93 Hoekveld (1993) underlines that the revival of regional identities does not exclude the possibility of adherence to other identities.

means towards 'ethnic survival' (Byram, 1986). In this way, the educational system serves as an institution of language planning and thus identity planning[94].

5.4 Who controls the curriculum?

The revival of regional identities has consequences for the school curriculum in European regions. Regional minorities demand that their culture and language be included in the school curriculum. The school curriculum defines 'what should be taught in schools'[95]. Traditionally, knowledge taught in schools has been seen as the transfer of culture: the whole of cultural attributes gathered during the course of human history. However, not all cultural attributes can be included in the school curriculum, because of limited time and the explosive growth of knowledge. The development of the school curriculum therefore necessitates selection. In this view, the curriculum should specify the knowledge of most worth to be transferred to future generations. In most cases, the issue of what constitutes the actual content of the curriculum is not addressed, as social consensus is presupposed around what valuable cultural 'goods' are[96]. In practice, 'culture' has been informed by an unitary and integrative idea of what should be mediated: the majority language, the history of the dominant groups in society and their values (cf. Welch, 1993).

Adjacent to developments in the sociology of education (Young, 1971; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Apple, 1986, 1990), comparative educationists have started to use a concept of 'culture' that is less unitary and integrative (Welch, 1991, 1993)[97]. Developing the school curriculum implies that merely certain cultural elements are included: the curriculum describes what selection of 'culture' is considered as valuable. This selection is linked to the position of groups in society. In this view, culture is seen as: 'an arena of social contest, largely unequal, in which the dominant group gains, or retains, control over a cultural definition which is thus seen as more legitimate, and of higher status – and which is subsequently confirmed in schools' (Welch, 1993, 8). Since dominant groups are able to select what knowledge is legitimate, the school curriculum does not reflect only 'what' knowledge is of most worth but in particular 'whose'. Instead of viewing the curriculum as a 'neutral' selection of cultural attributes, it is

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[94] Identity planning is the counterpart of language planning, as language and identity are interrelated (cf. Pool, 1979).

[95] cf. Holmes, B. and M. Mclean (1989) *The curriculum: a comparative perspective*. London: Unwin and Hyman, vi.

[96] Commenting on proposals for a core curriculum of 'common culture', Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) analyze the concept of culture in this view of the relation between culture and curriculum: 'From this perspective culture (...) is not a terrain of struggle: it is merely an artifact, a warehouse of goods, posited either as a canon of knowledge or a canon of information that has simply to be transmitted (...)' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991, 38).

[97] Welch underlines that in comparative education the idea of the school curriculum as a 'neutral' selection of cultural contents around which consensus exists was abandoned increasingly: 'No longer could knowledge or culture be seen as either monolithic or neutral. On the contrary, knowledge and culture now became arenas of contest, with classes, gender groupings, or *ethnic groups* [italics added] vying for control. Moreover, different aspects of knowledge and culture have more or less power and status and are connected to the distribution of power in society in particular ways. The notion of 'cultural capital' or 'cultural power' expresses this relationship' (Welch, 1991, 530–531).

analyzed in relation to the distribution of power in society[98]. Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) observe that: 'the culture transmitted by the school is related to the various cultures that make up the wider society, in that it confirms and sustains the culture of the dominant groups while marginalizing and silencing the cultures of subordinate groups (...)' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991, 49).

Apple (1990) refers to educational organisations as a system of institutions which helps to: 'produce the type of knowledge (...) that is needed to maintain the dominant economic, political, and *cultural* [italics added] arrangements that now exist' (Apple, 1990, x). In other words: the dominant majority employs education to reproduce the dominant (high-status) culture that is valuable to itself, rejecting (low-status) minority culture. In contrast, and resulting from struggle over legitimate definitions of knowledge, ethnic minorities in Europe are increasingly able to select the school knowledge which is valuable to them. They successfully discredit the legitimacy of majority knowledge. Some of them are able to do so within the curricula offered in public school systems, while other are establishing their own provisions.

[98] The relation between education and power is dialectical, as Young (1971) has underlined. He states that there exists a 'dialectical relationship between access to power and the opportunity to legitimize certain dominant categories, and the processes by which the availability of such categories to some groups enables them to assert power and control over others' (Young, 1971, 8).

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Comparative methodology and Mercator-Education's working method

In Chapter 1 two research goals were distinguished. The first goal focused on the issue of comparative methodology. The goal was to deepen the theoretical understanding of the comparative method in social sciences to improve the quality of the cross-regional/cross-national, comparative study of the position of lesser used languages in education. The research question was: 'what methodological considerations have been regarded as essential in comparative social science, in particular comparative education?'.

It appeared that several branches of comparative inquiry exist within the social sciences. As can be concluded from the example of comparative religion (see: Section 2.1), these disciplines have rarely developed their own comparative methodology. Rather, they have tended to lean on social science methodology in general and sociological discussions about comparative research in particular (see: Section 2.2). It can be concluded that the standpoint in these sociological discussions depends upon how 'comparative research' is defined and upon the object: is only one or are several regions, states or cultures included? The purpose of research is also essential: is research carried out in order to find similarities or to show differences?

Comparative education, the field of most interest to Mercator-Education, has answered these questions in various ways. Throughout its history two tendencies have been apparent (see: Chapter 3). On the one hand comparative educationists have focused on studying specific parts of foreign educational systems, especially internal school affairs such as curriculum and instructional practice, with the intention to ameliorate the domestic educational system. On the other hand, comparative educationists have studied education systems as a whole, viewed as an integral component of the larger society, with the goal of explaining differences and similarities between educational systems. As a rule, the first have concentrated on studies relevant for educational practice, whereas the latter have emphasized theoretical analysis.

In this study, three main methodological standpoints in comparative education have been described (see: Chapter 4):

a) The *positivist* approach to the comparative study of education. Positivism has highlighted macro-analysis, theory-building, the pursuit of objectivity and the use of (in particular) quantitative data. According to positivists it is possible, (exclusively) by means of the comparison of educational phenomena from various settings, to formulate generalized statements (laws) about the universal functioning of education. The goal of comparative education therefore is to find and explain consistency and variation within education as a universal social phenomenon. For the comparative study of minority schooling this would mean the construction of theory explaining why minority education takes place in the way it does. Such a theory would be less interested in the particularities of the region where minority schooling is found than in the theoretical lessons learned from it. Such a theory would, however, explain, in a universal way, the functioning of minority schooling, abstracted from its actual forms and shapes in minority language regions.

b) The *relativist/phenomenologist* approach to the comparative study of education. In this view, the study of foreign schools is a way of displaying the various forms that education can have in diverse cultural, historical and situational settings. Rather than concentrating on macro-analysis the attention of comparative educationists tends to shift to the micro-analysis of everyday school life. Both cultural relativism and phenomenology focus on the (cultural or situation specific) particularities of educational

phenomena. The goal of comparative education therefore is to show the unique features of educational systems throughout the world. For the comparative study of minority schooling this would mean the description of the unique features of minority education as a product of particular circumstances. The pattern of minority schooling in a particular region would be explained by referring to specific historical and cultural causes. Actual educational processes in schools would be studied from within, taking the perspective of actors such as teachers, pupils, parents.

c) The *case study/problem-solving* approach to the comparative study of education that aim at the development of general perspectives, while at the same time maintaining something of the particular characteristics of educational systems. Both the contributions of Holmes (see: Section 4.4.1) and Bereday (see: Section 4.4.2) offer the advantage of studying specific educational phenomena, tied within their own cultural context, while also pursuing the advancement of general theory. Moreover, both highlight the need to contribute to problems of educational policy. Less specifically connected to comparative education methodology than the frameworks of Holmes and Bereday is the use of case studies as a distinct strategy in the social sciences, aiming at generalisation (see: Sections 4.5.2 and 4.5.3). This approach offers perspectives for Mercator-Education as it combines in-depth study of educational processes in one region with the pursuit of an explanatory theory.

It can be concluded that the strategy Mercator-Education has followed in previous studies falls within the positivist standpoint in comparative education (see: Section 1.2)[99]. Above all, it has been a pragmatic, 'theory-less' working method. Mercator-Education's comparative inventories have:

- employed a standardized item list to gather information that would be 'comparable' in order to make comparison possible: the idea has been that the same instrument sent to all minority language communities would result in an objective classification according to fixed standards, such as the number of schools, teachers, pupils, etc.;
- focused on an analogous description of education within regions, followed by the establishment of a synthesis[100]. These two steps can be regarded as the data-gathering and classifying stages of research;
- emphasized objective description and the gathering of quantitative data (frequencies, figures, numbers).

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[99] The data-gathering by Mercator-Education has also led to separate, descriptive 'case reports' or 'monographic files' (e.g. the EMU reports, 1988). However, due to the variation in quality of these products (cf. van der Goot, 1994) and the fact they often were written by actors in minority language education, they can hardly be seen as case studies in the sense of Yin's methodological framework.

[100] To describe comparison in this way, the establishment of a synthesis, was proposed by e.g. Garcia Garrido (1987). He parallels comparative sciences to history: 'History (...) is a *synthesis* in which is included the diverse aspects of human life; none of those moments would have any meaning by themselves; what truly matters to the historian are not the individual acts but the chain of events. The same could be said of Comparative Law, Comparative Literature or Comparative Education. The comparison is also essentially a *synthesis* in which two or more different and separate realities are included and confronted' (Garcia Garrido, 1987, 30).

In particular the instrument used to gather data and the emphasis on careful classification disclose the positivistic tendency of Mercator-Education's working method. It seems as if Mercator-Education has followed the suggestion of Marc Antoine Jullien to compare different educational systems in an orderly way: 'involving the use of standard questionnaires to collect information and arranging the findings into comprehensive tables so that differences in education among countries could be appreciated at a glance' (Epstein, 1988, 3). By using such standard instruments and by constructing classifications, regularities and disregularities would appear, after which it would be possible to (inductively) develop theory.

It is concluded that, rather than focusing on pragmatic data-gathering, Mercator-Education should attempt to construct, elaborate and refine theory if it intends to explain the similarities and differences found. To develop such a theory, detailed knowledge of education in lesser used language regions in Europe is required. Such knowledge would have to include both the perspectives of language minorities themselves and the detached reflections of the researcher. In particular the use of single and multiple case study designs in the comparative study of minority language education is recommended. Such designs can offer in-depth study, without neglecting generalisation (see: Section 4.5). In other words: instead of continuing a pragmatic mainstream positivist approach, the case study/problem-solving approach is suggested[101].

6.2 Towards explanation: some suggestions for further research

The second goal focuses on Mercator-Education's research object rather than on its methodology. The goal is to contribute to the development of an explanatory theory of the position of lesser used languages in European educational systems. The research question is 'what explanatory analyses have been proposed, in sociological and educational theory in general and in comparative education in particular, that address questions relevant to the position of minority languages?' (cf. Section 1.3).

It is concluded that comparative educationists have engaged themselves amply with minority schooling. In general, however, comparative studies on indigenous minorities and education have been descriptive, and the development of theory has been very limited. Mostly, apart from a factual description of their characteristics, merely a typology of minorities has been proposed (e.g. Corner, 1988; Grant, 1988).

The Mercator-Education studies reveal that throughout many European regions monolingual minority language schools and bilingual schools have come up. Increasingly, schooling takes place through a lesser used language. Regional minorities in Europe are increasingly able to select the school knowledge which is valuable to them. They discredit the legitimacy of majority knowledge. Some of them are able to do so within the curricula offered in public school systems, while other establish their own provisions. As such, this educational phenomenon can be explained as the expression of an increasing sense of regional identity within a unifying Europe. For the regional minorities, the use of the minority language in education is expected to contribute to language maintenance and thereby the strengthening of identity. The growth of education in and about lesser used languages in Europe can thus satisfactorily be explained as correlating with the revival of regional identities. This conclusion involves the absolute position of the lesser used languages in European education: in recent decades, there

[101] During the project year 1993-1994, two projects employing case-study methodology have been designed.

has been an overall increase at the expense of the place of dominant languages in the school curriculum. The differences between regions are, however, considerable.

Although the development of an explanatory theory is the goal of positivist research, Mercator-Education's comparative inventories have not led to the formulation of a theory that explains the relative position of lesser used languages in the curriculum (the position of minority languages in curricula *vis-à-vis* each other). Mercator-Education's working method has resulted in valuable knowledge of educational processes previously not studied. The inventories (Sikma and Gorter, 1991; Tjeerdsma and Sikma, 1994; van der Goot, Renkema and Stuijt, 1994; Dekkers, 1995) contain a multitude of data on educational practices not available before. Above that, they have resulted in a number of classifications of the relative position of lesser used languages in European education. However, the step from classification to explanation is still to be taken. At this moment no comprehensive framework exists that explains differences between regions. In the Mercator-Education studies several factors have been mentioned that influence the relative position of lesser used languages in educational systems, such as:

- legal protection of the minority language;
- formal responsibility and policy for minority language education in the region;
- the existence of adequate teacher training;
- the availability of instructional material;
- attitudes of actors involved.

It is necessary, however, to analyze more systematically the extent to which differences can be attributed to characteristics of the regional minority itself, the national educational system and political conditions. Characteristics of the regional minority itself include 'quantitative' aspects, such as the number of speakers, and more 'qualitative' aspects such as the societal benefits and prestige of the language involved (cf. Giles, Leets and Coupland, 1990) and the degree to which majority language and minority language differ from each other. Both the 'objective' support for the minority language in e.g. media and public life and the 'subjective' ethnolinguistic vitality of the minority should be considered. Characteristics of the national educational system are e.g. the degree of centralization of the public educational system and the ease with which (educational) interest groups are able to influence educational policy-making in general and curriculum development in particular.

Concerning political conditions Corner (1988) states that cultural and linguistic minorities have: 'found themselves locked into the political and educational system of the majority which has only limited empathy towards recognising their needs. Economic and political factors seem to greatly determine the extent to which cultural and educational development can be created from a position of dependency (...)' (Corner, 1988, 232). The dependence of minorities on the political system of the majority obviously is an important determinant of their relative position in education[102]. This dependency controls the degree to which their curriculum demands are responded to as well as the possibilities they have of establishing their own provisions. The evident reaction of minorities to this dependency is a call for more autonomy[103].

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[102] Churchill's (1986) policy-oriented analysis includes a question on what external political elements influence the educational position of minorities: 'How do the elements of finance, organization and governance relate to each other and to *the general issue of the extent to which the minority group exercises control over, or influence on, the education offered to its members?*' [italics added] (Churchill, 1986, 31).

[103] Corner (1988), however, comparing Catalonia and the Basque Country, points to the fact that 'the perception of autonomy which the minority regards itself as having' is also an important factor (Corner, 1988, 236-237). This is an example of a 'characteristic of the minority'.

If the goal of developing an explanatory theory is to be met, it is of importance to investigate characteristics of regional minorities, such as processes of reconstruction of identity, as well as educational systems and political conditions. It is especially the interaction of these three components in specific regions that currently demands further research. The nature of these questions implies that such research should be in the form of conducting case studies.

6.3 The prospect of conducting theory-driven case study research

Although the expressions 'case' and 'case study' have frequently been used by comparative educationists and much of their work has in fact been the study of one specific educational system or phenomenon, the methodological debate in comparative education has rarely included cautious reflection on the use of case studies. In general, positivists have granted little importance to the use of individual case studies, since they have focused on generalisation. From a cultural relativist and phenomenological standpoint the case study has been equalled to ethnographic inquiry. For them, the conduct of a case study signifies the 'illumination of the particular' (Stenhouse, 1979). The development of more general principles has been of minor interest to them.

Recent contributions of Yin (1989; 1993), who delineates the use of cases as a distinct research strategy and who does not equate it with ethnography, suggest that is conceivable to conduct case studies as a means of developing such general principles. Methodological recommendations can be given for the generalisation to a more comprehensive theory. As was suggested above, the prospects of this use of case studies for the development of explanatory theory are favourable. Such a theory would have to be the product of research as well as guide further study. Both imaginative deductive reasoning and inductive data-analysis is required in order to advance a theory of minority schooling. Further study of Mercator-Education should therefore be 'theory-driven'. The theory should inform the choice and analysis of cases, whereas the results of case studies should further theory. Both Holmes and Bereday have shown how such theory-driven research can inform educational policy at the same time.

Both Yin's view on the use of case studies and the methodological contributions of Holmes and Bereday suggest that is valuable to study one region (a single in-depth case study) or several regions (a multiple case design). It is suggested to conduct theory-driven case-study research on the interrelationship between general characteristics of European language minorities, educational circumstances[104] and political conditions[105]. Specific educational topics that deserve attention are processes of curriculum development within regions as well as the precise consequences of the division between both public/private education and centralist/decentral educational policy. By thoroughly investigating the interaction of these aspects in European regions, there is a prospect of building a theory of the position of minority languages in education.

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[104] A Mercator-Education research project called 'European models of bilingual education' was designed during the project-year 1993-1994. One of the main research questions is how larger societal and linguistic backgrounds are linked to particular educational models.

[105] A Fryske Akademy/Mercator-Education project called 'Policy making for minority languages' was designed during the project-year 1993-1994. Within this research project the process of policy making regarding minority language education in a selected number of regions is an important topic.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

Map of lesser used language communities in the 15 member-states of the European Union

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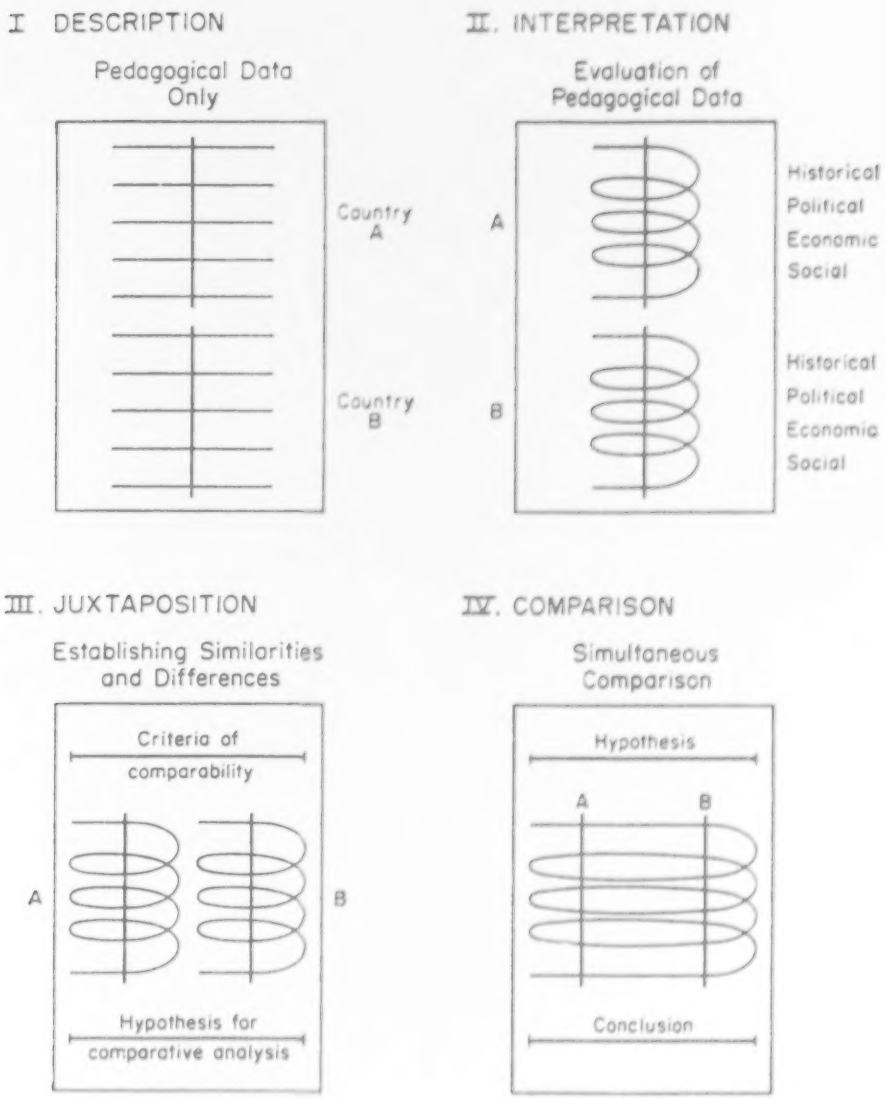
Appendix II

'Comparison' as understood by Bereday: steps of comparative analysis



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Appendix III

Lesser used languages in European primary education: relative position of 31 lesser used languages in primary education (Source: adapted from: Sikma and Gorter, 1988/1991; Gorter, 1991).

Strong	Middle	Weak
Basque (Spain)	Basque (France)	Albanian (Italy)
Catalan (Spain)	Breton (France)	Catalan (Italy)
Danish (FRG)	Catalan (France)	Cornish (UK)
French (Italy)	Corsican (France)	Croatian (Italy)
Frisian (NL)	German (France)	Flemish (France)
Galician (Spain)	Ladin (Italy)	Friulian (Italy)
German (Belgium)	Occitan (France)	Greek (Italy)
German (Denmark)	Scottish Gaelic (UK)	Irish (N-Ireland, UK)
German (Italy)		North Frisian (FRG)
Irish (Ireland)		Occitan (Italy)
Luxembourgish (L)		
Slovene (Italy)		
Welsh (UK)		

Note: Saterfrisian (FRG), Romani (Italy) and Sardinian (Italy) also were included in the EMU-inventory. It appeared that they were the only communities responding in which no schooling in the minority language was available on the primary level.

Appendix IV

Lesser used languages in European teacher training: relative position of 24 lesser used languages in teacher training (Source: adapted from: Dekkers, 1995, chapter 8.3).

Strong	Middle	Weak
Basque (Spain)	Breton (France)	Albanian (Italy)
Catalan (Balearic Isles, S.)	Corsican (France)	Basque (France)
Catalan (Catalonia, Spain)	Frisian (NL)	Catalan (France)
Catalan (Valencia, Spain)	German (France)	Friulian (Italy)
Danish (FRG)	Irish (N-Ireland, UK)	Ladin (Italy)
French (Italy)	Scottish-Gaelic (UK)	North Frisian (FRG)
Galician (Spain)	Welsh (UK)	
German (Belgium)		
German (Denmark)		
German (Italy)		
Irish (Ireland)		

Note: Cornish (UK) and Greek (Province of Lecce, Italy) were included in the EMOL-inventory. It appeared that no teacher education provisions whatsoever were available for the lesser used language involved.